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DRAGON™

A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® ROLEPLAYING GAME SUPPLEMENT

DRAGON™

ISSUE NO. 369

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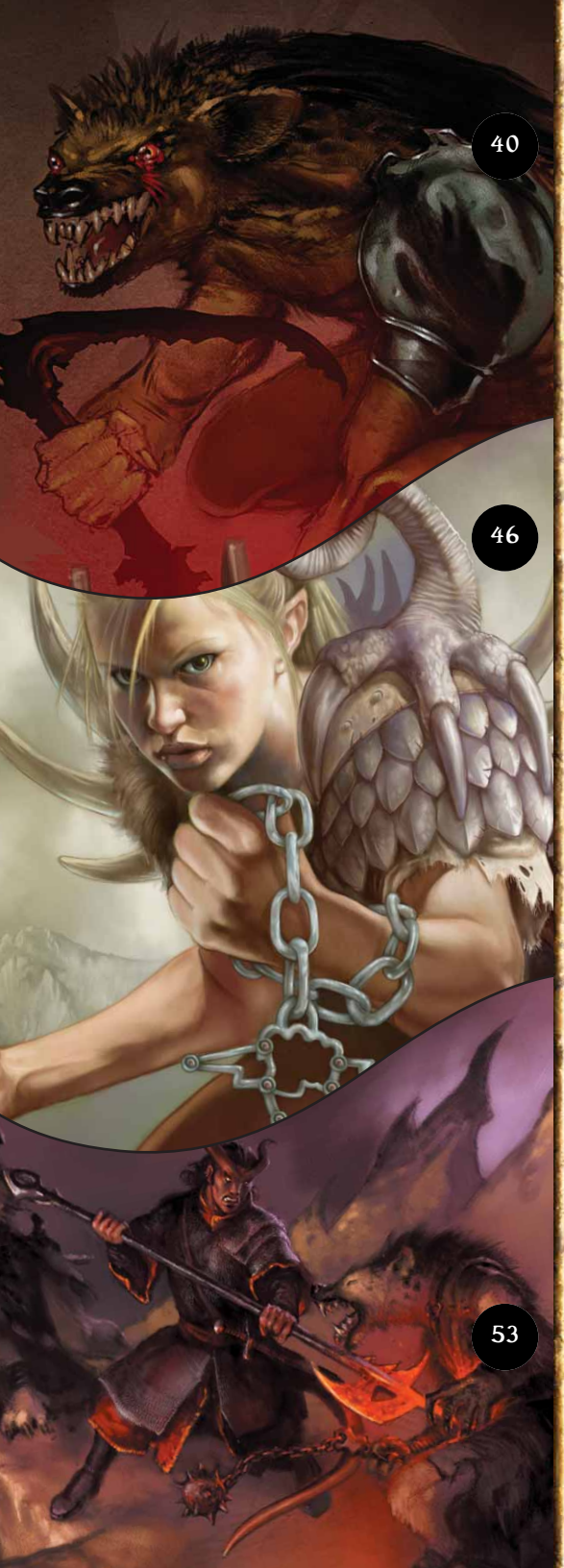

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DRAGON November 2008

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Thank You, Dungeons & Dragons

It's November, so it's time to start thinking about turkeys, stuffing, and pumpkin pie. Oh, and giving thanks, of course! This year, I'm thankful for a lot. But right now, I'm especially thankful for the D&D game—especially this year.

Why is that? Well, with all the news about the economy tanking, people are looking more and more for ways to save money and still enjoy themselves. Retail sales across the board are hurting right now as people tighten their belts and prepare for a recession. With all the doom and gloom, it's good to take your mind off reality for a while and do something fun. Finding a way to do that, though, can be tricky. And that's why I think the D&D game is the perfect recession-time hobby.

The cost of entry is incredibly low for the game, for starters. Picking up a *Player's Handbook* only costs what it would take you to take your significant other out to the movies for a night. But instead of walking away after a couple of hours, maybe even feeling unsatisfied with the dollars spent, you get hours of entertainment from that single purchase.

If you want even more opportunity for hours of entertainment, pick up a *Dungeon Master's Guide*. If you're willing to run a game, you'll have no end of gamers lining up to play with you. If you've never tried DMing, and you're looking for places to save some cash, give it a shot. In my group, several players have recently tried a hand at running a game, each time with great success.

Then, staying heavily involved in the game requires only an occasional re-investment. Once you have a character, our new print release plan informs you which books you want to buy. Playing a fighter? *Martial Power* is for you. Wizard? *Arcane Power* is just around the corner. And when *Player's Handbook 2* comes out, you can essentially double all your available options with one more book. Can you think of another hobby that brings good friends together, gets your brain creatively engaged, and costs you so little?

Of course, I've saved the best for last. We know that in tough economic times, subscription services suffer the most. Historically, magazine subscriptions drop significantly when people start trimming their budgets. But is there a better deal for a D&D fan out there right now than Insider? You basically get a supplement's worth of gaming content and access to the *D&D Compendium* for $5 a month. I was going to compare that deal to the tired example of giving up one fancy coffee a month. But you know what? You should take your laptop to your local Starbucks, order that fancy coffee, and use the free Wi-Fi to peruse the latest *Dragon* article or *Dungeon* adventure. If you're looking to trim your budget, I'd say cancel the high-speed Internet and bum off your local coffee shop.

So, despite all the grim news from the government, I'm feeling thankful this month. Thankfu l for a great game, thankful for a great job, and thankful for great friends who enjoy my hobby with me. So keep playing, and get your friends to check out *D&D Insider*, since there isn't a better way to stay engaged with the hobby. In fact, this year, think about adding a new Thanksgiving tradition to your family gathering, and break out your dice and an adventure from *Dungeon* after dinner.

Playing Minotaurs

by Robert J. Schwalb

illustrations by Ryan Barger and Marc Sasso

MINOTAURS EMBODY the tension between civilization and savagery—discipline and madness—because the minotaurs stand in two worlds. Tugged toward wanton violence but bound by conscience, numerous minotaurs are driven to rise above their dark impulses. Such a minotaur walks the labyrinthine pathways of introspection, seeking the balance between the monstrous and refined. Like a deadly maze, this personal journey has hazards and traps aplenty. Innumerable minotaurs succumb to the wicked temptations staining their souls, whereupon they find themselves thralls to the dread Baphomet, the Horned King. Minotaurs must struggle to become more than the beasts they resemble or succumb to demonic brutality.

Play a minotaur if you want . . .

- ✦ to be a mighty warrior possessed of incredible strength and endurance.
- ✦ to be a monstrous adventurer struggling against villainous tendencies.
- ✦ to be a member of a race that favors the barbarian, fighter, and warden classes.

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RACIAL TRAITS
Average Height: 7' 1" - 7' 5"
Average Weight: 320–350 lb.

Ability Scores: +2 Strength, +2 Constitution
Size: Medium
Speed: 6 squares
Vision: Normal

Languages: Common
Skill Bonuses: +2 Nature, +2 Perception
Ferocity: If you are reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, you can make a melee basic attack before falling unconscious.
Heedless Charge: You gain a +2 racial bonus to AC against opportunity attacks you provoke during a charge.
Goring Charge: You can use *goring charge* as an encounter power.

Goring Charge **Minotaur Racial Power**

You charge the enemy and gore it with your horns.

Encounter
Standard Action **Melee** 1
Requirement: You must charge and use this power in place of a melee basic attack.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength + 4 vs. AC
Increase to +6 at 11th level, +8 at 21st level.
Hit: 1d6 + Strength modifier damage, and the target is knocked prone.
Increase the damage to 2d6 + Strength modifier at 11th level and 3d6 + Strength modifier at 21st level.

Physical Qualities

Minotaurs combine the features of human and bull, having the build and musculature of a hulking humanoid, but with the cloven hooves, a bovine tail, and, their most distinctive feature of all, a bull's head. Fur covers their upper bodies, coarse and thick on their heads and necks, and it gradually thins around their shoulders until it becomes normal hair over their arms and upper torso. The thick hair turns shaggy once more at the waist and thickens around their loins and legs, with tufts at the end of their tails and around their powerful hooves. Minotaurs take pride in their horns, and sharpness, size, and color speak to the minotaur's power and place within its society. Fur and skin coloring runs from albino white to coal black, and everything between, though most have red or brown fur and hair, with lighter tones underneath.

Labyrinthine patterns are important to minotaurs and such decoration appears on minotaur clothing, armor, weapons, and sometimes, on their hides. Each pattern is particular to a clan, and its size and complexity helps minotaurs identify family allegiance and caste. The patterns evolve through the generations, growing more expansive based on its members' deeds and the clan's history, each knot remarking on a signature event.

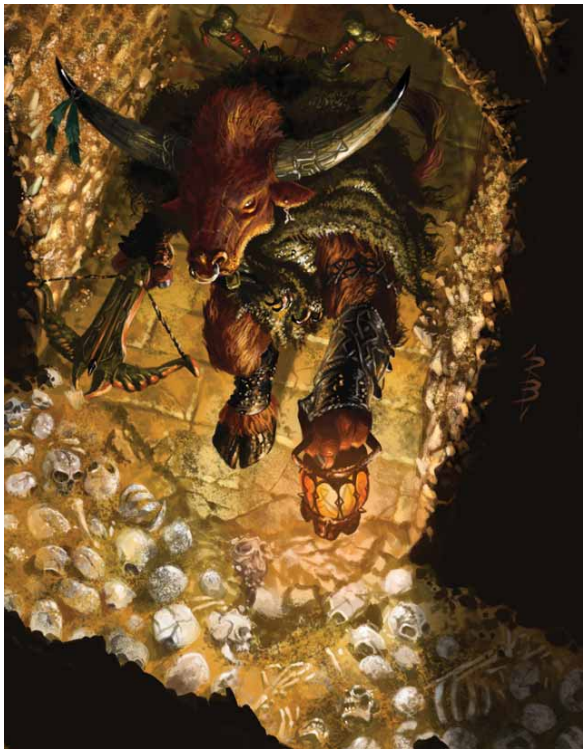
Minotaurs live as long as humans do.

Playing a Minotaur

The minotaurs' preference for labyrinths is legendary, but their connection to mazes is more than a quirk. It is central to their beliefs and how they see the world around them. The labyrinth is the physical representation of the spiritual and psychological journey each minotaur must undertake to make peace with its conflicted nature.

Each minotaur must navigate the perils of the self to transcend bestial impulses. One minotaur might achieve this easily. Another might wander the corridors of his or her mind and soul for an entire lifetime, trapped within the circuitous passages of self-deception and monstrous desires. Those who fail might descend into depravity, becoming the thralls of the Horned King, whose presence darkens every minotaur community like a looming specter.

Minotaur society is similarly complex, stratified into discrete, merit-based castes. A minotaur can move in social rank through aptitude, as well as great deeds or terrible crimes. Among civilized minotaurs, duty and traditions reinforce the caste structure. Social class is a restriction and a weapon among corrupted minotaurs.



Priests occupy the highest caste. Minotaurs look to holy ones for leadership, so priests command the respect and accord of all the people. They define laws, pass judgment, and keep histories and traditions. The caste can include a variety of mystics, shamans, holy warriors, and clerics. Minotaurs who have escaped Baphomet's depravity look to priests professing faith in Erathis, Moradin, Pelor, and Bahamut, or some subset of these. Cabalists spread Baphomet's wickedness among the minotaur settlements under their control.

Although the priest caste holds the greatest power and influence, the warrior caste is very powerful.

Battle prowess a high ideal, and many minotaurs strive to master combat training and join the warrior caste. To wield a weapon with skill is important, but to know when to use a weapon is of far greater value. Minotaurs who revere the gods also admire discipline and the judicious use of battle prowess. For Baphomet's minotaurs, weapon skill is a tool for acquiring power and defiling the world.

Artisans, scholars, hedge mages, and other skilled workers form the commoner caste of minotaur society. Beneath these are the slaves. In civilized communities, the slave caste consists the corrupted and the criminal. Evil minotaur societies enslave any whom they conquer, and any slave can be sacrificed to Baphomet at any moment.

Magicians, such as wizards, defy the norm in minotaur culture. One wizard might have only enough skill to be considered a commoner, while another mage is considered a warrior for her great destructive power. A highly educated and pious mage could even be considered a priest.

Station informs a minotaur's outlook. Even those who leave their secluded communities find it hard to escape caste expectations. A minotaur adventurer might show deference to a priest. Similarly, minotaur rogues and other ne'er-do-wells might affect meekness around those whom they see as their betters.

Though many minotaurs are civilized, they suffer suspicion and hatred from other races. Animosity stems not only from monstrous appearance, but also from infamy. Wicked minotaurs are remorseless raiders and killers, and these are often the only minotaurs known in a given area.

Minotaur Characteristics: Bloodthirsty, cruel, disciplined, enlightened, frustrated, militant, mystical, polite, savage, spiritual, tortured

Male Minotaur Names: Asteron, Bjorkus, Codrus, Foostus, Goeban, Jak, Minron, Noostoron, Podrus, Terios

Female Minotaur Names: Duula, Esteru, Hester, Kuonu, Loodra, Oestra, Raastred, Seestra, Uovana, Weoren

Minotaur Adventurers

Rare is the minotaur who leaves its hidden society to seek a life of adventure. Such minotaurs might abandon their homelands to right a wrong, flee a crime, or escape the clutches of Baphomet's cultists. Three sample minotaur adventurers are described below.

Bjorkus is a minotaur barbarian who broke free from a clan in the thrall of demon worship. Having watched his loved ones give into the cabalists' filthy promises, he witnessed his home's serenity collapse into violence and mayhem. Upon escaping, he vowed he would fight Baphomet. One day, Bjorkus hopes to return to purify his people and remove the burden of corruption from their souls.

Esteru is a minotaur paladin of Erathis in search of spiritual enlightenment. Unable to understand why people fear her, she is curious about other cultures. She understands she has an odd appearance, but how she looks outside has nothing to do with the purity of her heart. She is eloquent and has unimpeachable manners, confounding those she meets with the disparity of her appearance with her bearing.

Jak is a minotaur fighter. A young warrior filled with dreams of honor and glory, he set out to hone his fighting talents. One day, he hopes to return to his homeland and claim his place as a member of the warrior caste. He has an almost mystical connection with his weapons, spending long hours in quiet contemplation of minotaur fighting techniques—when he's not studying the fighting forms of those he meets.

Minotaur Origin

Civilization's wreckage litters the world, and in these ruins, one can divine the secrets of fallen empires that even time has forgotten. The empire of Ruul is one of these lost civilizations, brought low through moral corruption. Minotaurs once tamed themselves and Ruul's lands. Evil shattered all they created.

The demon lord Baphomet was once a great primordial with strong ties to the natural world. He can rightly claim minotaurs, for it is he who raised them as soldiers to claim nature for him in place of Melora, his most hated deific foe. In the Dawn War, minotaurs fought against the gods on the side of Baphomet. But Baphomet was defeated. One myth says the Horned King hurled himself into the Abyss rather than face the final judgment of the gods.

In defeat, minotaurs were without direction in the world. Acting quicker than Melora, Erathis claimed the minotaurs for herself, teaching them language and law. She called on Moradin to instruct them in crafts. In the name of their new guardians, minotaurs founded the city of Ruul on a southern archipelago.

From its first founding, Ruul was destined for greatness. Erathis blessed Ruul's people, and they benefited from a close kinship with the lord of artisans. Legends hold that Erathis's servants walked among the minotaurs of Ruul, advising them and giving them the tools they needed to spread across the islands and beyond.

Baphomet, however, endured in the Abyss. Numerous minotaurs, in Ruul and elsewhere, still revered the Horned King and could feel his influence on their souls. Eventually, Baphomet responded to their rites. He offered unbridled freedom and conquest. Corruption wormed its way into Erathis's grand experiment.

Cultists of Baphomet secretly influenced Ruul's policies. What began as Ruul's peaceful expansion became an adventure of subjugation. The folk of Ruul became cruel. They spread their beliefs by fire and

sword, slaughtering those who stood against them and enslaving the rest.

Although some minotaurs clung to the ways of the gods, wealth and conquest blinded most of Ruul's folk to their traditions. As Ruul swelled in size, it also swelled in corruption. Decadent nobles committed unholy acts in the darkness of their homes. False priests spread through the land, inviting others into mysteries best left alone or put to the sword. Baphomet's blood cults rose, poisoning the civilization with their wickedness. Eventually, the Horned King became the spiritual master of Ruul, his followers bold enough to show themselves in the streets. Conquest quickly turned to desecration.

Its fall complete, Ruul's wickedness was something the gods could no longer abide. With Erathis's allowance, Melora visited volcanic devastation on Ruul. Kord aided her with storms the likes of which the southern seas have not again seen. In the end, Ruul was no more. Its center destroyed, the empire's remnant fell into civil war and eventual dissolution. Its survivors—some of whom, for their loyalty to the gods, received warning—scattered across the world.

Minotaurs developed an abiding fear of divine reprisals and a passionate attitude—love or hate—toward the world's deities. Although the destruction drove countless minotaurs to serve Baphomet more fervently, it made others repent or continue to serve the gods with more zeal. In the early days after Ruul's fall, even good-hearted minotaurs held the empire's destruction against Melora and Kord. They revered the old gods of their people, Erathis and Moradin, and took up allegiance with Pelor and Bahamut to guard them against the reemergence of iniquity. In time, these preferences became traditions.

Minotaurs are products of a tragic history. Ruul's bones are scattered on a volcanic archipelago in the southern seas, and across the world. Baphomet's bloodlust and butchery run in minotaurs' veins, a tainted birthright. But a similar yet righteous ardor allows some to hold to civilization and better ways.

Racial Feats

Minotaurs have lots of options to play up racial traits.

Heroic Tier Feats

The following feats are available to a character of any level who meets the prerequisites.

Goring Shove [Minotaur]

Prerequisites: Strength 15, minotaur, *goring charge* racial power

Benefit: When you hit with *goring charge*, you can also push the target 1 square.

Greathorn [Minotaur]

Prerequisites: Minotaur, *goring charge* racial power

Benefit: The damage dice from your *goring charge* attack increases from d6s to d8s.

Natural Cunning [Minotaur]

Prerequisite: Minotaur

Benefit: You gain a +3 feat bonus to Perception checks and to checks made to avoid becoming lost, such as Intelligence checks made against a *maze* spell.

Opportunity Gore [Minotaur]

Prerequisites: Minotaur, *goring charge* racial power

Benefit: Whenever you make an opportunity attack, instead of making the usual melee basic attack, you can use your *goring charge* racial power without expending it, even if you have used it this encounter. When you do so, you ignore the power's requirement and action type, and your target is the creature that triggered the opportunity attack.

Paragon Tier Feats

The following feats are available to a character of 11th level or higher who meets the prerequisites.

Beast Within [Minotaur]

Prerequisites: Minotaur, ferocity racial feature

Benefit: While you are bloodied, you gain +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls.

Bloody Gore [Minotaur]

Prerequisites: Minotaur, *goring charge* racial power

Benefit: Whenever you are first bloodied in an encounter, you recharge your *goring charge* racial power.

Brutal Ferocity [Minotaur]

Prerequisites: Minotaur, ferocity racial feature

Benefit: When reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, you can use an at-will attack power in place of the usual melee basic attack.

Epic Tier Feat

The following feat is available is available to a character of 21st level or higher who meets the prerequisites.

Uncanny Scent [Minotaur]

Prerequisites: Wisdom 17 or trained in Perception, minotaur

Benefit: Creatures within 2 squares of you gain no benefit from concealment or total concealment against you, and invisible creatures within 2 squares of you are effectively visible to you.

Paragon Paths

The following paragon paths are exclusive to minotaurs.

Beastblooded Minotaur

"Beast? Me? You haven't seen anything yet!"

Prerequisite: Minotaur

The fury of Baphomet is at the root of your people's creation. His demonic rage is still connected to you and yours, giving strength. In your line of work, the allure of increased might is a temptation too great to resist. You learned to tap hatred and wrath to lay your enemies low. Fury is your friend when steel rings, and the cries of the wounded and dying fill the air. The grim majesty of combat quickens your minotaur soul. What began as your hesitant step in the direction of savagery has become a full run toward your inner beast. You refuse to pay homage to Baphomet, but you don't turn away from his gifts. Why should you, when you can use the demon lord's own weapons against him? Still, the desire to kill sometimes threatens to overwhelm you. Your body ripples with power, and you become more beastly as time passes. Should you question the wisdom of your decision?

Beastblooded Minotaur Path Features

Beastly Action (11th level): Immediately after you spend an action point to take an extra action, you can charge as a free action.

Bloodied Outburst (11th level): Whenever you are first bloodied in an encounter, you can make a melee basic attack against an adjacent enemy as a free action.

Savage Apotheosis (16th level): Your speed increases by 2 and your reach increases by 1.

Beastblooded Minotaur Powers

Sweeping Gore — Beastblooded Minotaur Attack 11

You catch your foe on your horns and toss it out of the way.

Encounter
Standard Action **Melee** 1
Requirement: You must charge and use this power in place of a melee basic attack.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength + 6 vs. AC
Increase to Strength + 8 at 21st level.
Hit: 2d10 + Strength modifier damage, and the target slides 2 squares.

Thrashing Horns — Beastblooded Minotaur Utility 12

You swing your horns in a deadly arc, catching those who are off their guard.

Daily ✦ Stance
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Whenever you hit an enemy with an opportunity attack, you deal an additional 1d6 damage and push the target 1 square.

Giant's Sweep — Beastblooded Minotaur Attack 20

With a vicious sweep of your weapon, you drive your foes down before you.

Daily ✦ Weapon
Standard Action **Close** blast 2
Target: Each creature in blast
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, the target is pushed 2 squares and knocked prone.
Miss: Half damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares, but is not knocked prone.

Horned Champion

"I do what I was made to do, for the causes I choose."

Prerequisites: Minotaur, defender or striker role

Your skill and discipline in battle have launched you into the warrior caste of minotaur society. By mastering your natural weapons and your other combat skills, you have transformed yourself into a living weapon. In searching yourself, you have melded opposing spiritual forces into a finely honed machine of war. The thrill of the fight flows through you, but you temper the impulse to give in to savagery. You know that a tainted body, mind, and soul wait at the end of that road. To you, every contest challenges your resolve and focuses your mind toward absolute control over yourself and your situation.

Horned Champion Path Features

Vigorous Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to make an attack while bloodied, you gain temporary hit points equal to your Constitution score.

Aggressive Resurgence (11th level): When you use your second wind, you can forgo the defense bonus and regain no hit points. If you do, you instead recharge your *goring charge* racial power, and you gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls until the end of your next turn.

Never Say Die (16th level): When you are reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, you are dying but do not fall unconscious. If the result of death saving throw you make is 10 or lower, you fall unconscious. You still die if reduced to your bloodied value expressed as a negative number.

Horned Champion Powers

Follow-up Gore — Horned Champion Attack 11

You unbalance your foe with a weapon strike, leaving the enemy open to a ferocious gore.

Encounter ✦ Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** 1
Primary Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 1 [W] + 2d6 + Strength modifier damage, the target slides 1 square and is knocked prone.

Bloodthirsty Shift Horned Champion Utility 12

Not content with one victim, you spring forward to engage the next.

Encounter
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You reduce an enemy to 0 hit points
Effect: You can shift your speed if your movement ends in a space adjacent to an enemy.

Driving Gore Horned Champion Attack 20

With a brutal swing of your horns, you knock your enemy back and down . . . just where you want it.

Daily
Standard Action **Melee** 1
Requirement: You must charge and use this power in place of a melee basic attack.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength + 8 vs. AC
Hit: 5d6 + Strength modifier damage, the target slides 4 squares and is knocked prone..
Miss: Half damage, and the target slides 2 squares.

Minotaur Kinspeaker

"Ancestors! Hear our need, and come forth to aid our cause!"

Prerequisites: Minotaur, leader role

Each generation leaves behind the ashes of the old, but the spirits of the past live on for those with the eyes to see them and the ears to hear them. You dwell in two worlds, opening your inner awareness to look upon death and tease out its secrets. You commune with these spirits, seeking out their advice and divining solutions to your troubles by solving their riddles. Their signs are everywhere—even in the omens you see and the portents you dream.

Minotaur Kinspeaker Path Features

Ancestral Allies (11th level): Ancestor spirits swirl around you. When you hit an enemy with an opportunity attack, the target grants combat advantage to you and your allies until the end of your next turn.

Counseled Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, each ally that can see and hear you can reroll all failed skill checks until the end of your next turn. The ally must keep the second result.

Lend Spiritual Aid (16th level): When an ally within 5 squares of you that can see and hear you spends an action point to make an attack, that ally gains concealment until the end of your next turn.

Minotaur Kinspeaker Powers

Unleashed Beast Minotaur Kinspeaker Attack 11

An ancestor spirits awaken violence in your allies.

Encounter
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One ally
Effect: The ally makes a basic attack. If this attack hits, the ally gains resist 10 all until the end of your next turn.

Ancestral Congress Minotaur Kinspeaker Utility 12

Ghostly forms mutter and wail as they swirl about you.

Daily ✦ Fear, Stance
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You and all adjacent allies gain concealment. If an enemy ends its turn adjacent to you, you can slide that foe 1 square.

Ancestral Possession Minotaur Kinspeaker Attack 20

A ghostly form streaks from you to plunge into your foe's body.

Daily ✦ Psychic, Reliable
Standard Action **Close** blast 5
Target: One creature
Attack: Wisdom + 6 vs. Will or Charisma + 6 vs. Will
Hit: 2d8 + Wisdom modifier or Charisma modifier psychic damage, and the target is dominated (save ends).

Minotaurs in Your Game

In the *Dungeons & Dragons*® world, minotaurs offer players interesting roleplaying opportunities. Although playing the tough, bullheaded warrior can be literal with minotaurs, players can also explore the tug of good and evil that shapes minotaur existence. Baphomet created minotaurs, and his depravity wriggles in the dark places of every minotaur soul. The demon lord is unrelenting in trying to bend all minotaurs to his will. Further, minotaurs have a cruel reputation and unmistakable look, so prejudice and curiosity from others could be issues. Villains might try to use a minotaur for evil ends.

Consider how the minotaurs fit in your game world. Are they as presented here—ancient beings caught between the divine and the demonic? Perhaps Melora created the minotaurs, and Baphomet corrupted them in his desire to usurp the goddess's power. Uncorrupted minotaurs might have turned away from Melora because she abandoned them to Baphomet's depredations. Maybe the rise of right-thinking minotaurs is recent, emphasizing most minotaurs as antagonists. If you prefer to mostly exclude minotaurs from your world, a particular minotaur PC could be cursed, seeking a way to restore his or her natural form.

About the Author

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Robert dedicates this article to Joe Quarles. "You're the only guy I know who would suffer through six racial levels to play a minotaur. Joe, this one's for you."

Bazaar of the Bizarre

A Motley Assortment of Magic Items

by Kolja Raven Liquette

illustrations by David Griffith

One magic item can merely be an adventurer's tool, just like any other. Using treasure this way might seem completely reasonable, particularly in campaigns where magic items are like currency. But doing this can also diminish the value of magic items to the game's narrative. The first step toward imbuing magic items with importance is to develop their history.

The extra creative work put into a magic item, whether by Dungeon Master or player, can forge a lasting legacy for an item. Doing so isn't the norm in the D&D game. Usually, magic items that have more power trump their predecessors. However, history and a unique story, perhaps even associated only with the PC owner, can make magic items more fun.

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The magic items that follow either come with lore or with personal tales that steep them in legend. You can embrace these accounts verbatim or contrive fantastic tales of your own. Most important, you can do so knowing that once a legacy has been set in motion, it can be an interesting and even defining point of a campaign.

Feral Armor

When a predatory animal dies after winning a battle, Melora's followers have been known to harvest its body parts as raw materials for *feral armor.* Once tailored to size and enchanted, such a suit of armor is imbued with the fierce spirit of a survivor and hunter. The truth is that the spirit of the beast forever lingers within the hide, always ready to lash out with claws empowered by the wearer. Rangers welcome the ferocious instinct that accompanies this armor, and they sometimes even act like the slain creature did in life. The bond between armor and owner grows over time and, according to some tales, has even led to the wearer seeking out whatever force was responsible for the animal's death. Although this kind of behavior has been likened to possession, no compulsion truly drives the wearer. Justice or a desire for balance urges the good-hearted wearer on, while the wicked seek only blood and vengeance.

Adventure Seed

A prowling, starving, or wounded natural beast attacks the player characters. The story of what motivated the creature to attack in the first place, however, can be determined after its hide is crafted into *feral armor.* The beast could have been prowling to protect her young and might still want to ensure their safety. If starving, the creature might have been pushed out of its natural habitat by humanoid expansion or something more sinister. A wounded creature could even seek retribution against its original attacker, if the attacker lives still. The armor never takes control of the wearer, but the owner can empathically sense when the spirit of the beast wants to act.

Feral Armor — **Level 7+**

This armor causes its wearer to develop a ferocious streak, like that of the predator that once wore the same skin.

Lvl 7	+2	2,600 gp	Lvl 22	+5	325,000 gp
Lvl 12	+3	13,000 gp	Lvl 27	+6	1,625,000 gp
Lvl 17	+4	62,000 gp			

Armor: Hide
Enhancement: AC
Property: Gain a claw attack while wearing this armor: a one handed military light blade melee weapon with +3 proficiency bonus to attack rolls and deals 1d8 damage. The wearer gains proficiency with this weapon. The claw attack has an enhancement bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls equal to the enhancement bonus of this armor. This attack counts as a melee basic attack.
Power (Encounter): Standard Action. Close burst 1; targets enemies; make a basic melee attack using the claw attack granted by this armor against each enemy in burst.

Pact Bow

Elf followers of Corellon, deity of magic, long ago desired a means through which they could weave a stronger arcane bond to their god. Their ties to the natural world had caused their inborn magical talent to weaken over time. Some magically inclined elves contrived a way to bridge their worldly tendencies with the magic of the fey. A *pact bow* is one successful realization of this goal. The tactical advantage of a *pact bow* was immediately apparent to many elf warlocks. Such a warlock could strike from close range with arcane powers and from long range with archery, while remaining cloaked in fey shadows as he or she moved through the wilderness.

The lethal combination of arcane and martial might spawned numerous elven orders of arcane archers. The Order of the Piercing Star is one such loosely knit union that preemptively targets those who threaten elven lands. Elven heritage, loyalty to elven rulers, and arcane power are the only prerequisites for membership. Those who prove their loyalty to the order gain a *pact bow.*

Pact Bow — **Level 2+**

Crafted from a tree deep within the Feywild, this bow is a conduit for warlock powers.

Lvl 2	+1	520 gp	Lvl 17	+4	65,000 gp
Lvl 7	+2	2,600 gp	Lvl 22	+5	325,000 gp
Lvl 12	+3	13,000 gp	Lvl 27	+6	1,625,000 gp

Weapon: Bow
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 damage per plus
Property: If you are an elf, this bow functions as a warlock implement for you (but do not apply the weapon's proficiency bonus to attack rolls for warlock powers).
Power (Daily): Free Action. Use this power when you cast a ranged or area warlock attack spell. You cast the spell through your bow, replacing the spell's range with the range of your bow and gaining the bow's proficiency bonus to the attack roll.

Adventure Seed

The player characters might cross paths with the Order of the Piercing Star in an elf-controlled wilderness or in lands with portals to the Feywild. Members of the order can be friend or foe, noting that the elves of the order are fiercely protective of their lands. Unauthorized intruders sometimes escape with only a warning, but even so, conversation is strained and terse. Patrolling members of the order sometimes attack first and ask questions later. Regardless of their tact, members of the Order of the Piercing Star are known for striking quickly from range and fading into the darkness.

Winged Bracers

Long ago, when Arkhosia covered the land, a massive endeavor was undertaken that required magical and mundane resources. Ruling a contiguous empire was not enough for the dragonborn. They wanted to rule "over" it. And so, like true dragons surveying their territory from on high, the dragonborn built Ustraternes, the City of Flying Stone. A mobile floating metropolis, Ustraternes became a seat of power for the dragonborn empire. It was outfitted with a small army of elite soldiers from all across the lands.

Despite the enormous costs associated with magic item construction, each soldier was equipped with an identical set of winged bracers, allowing entire strike forces to silently deploy from the city by gliding down to the land below. The soldiers reveled in these attacks, feeling as if the blood of true dragons coursed through their veins as they fell upon their enemies from the sky. It was common for the city to remain concealed high above the clouds as its elite warriors leaped over the side. Ustraternes then descended into view, eventually lowering enough to reclaim the soldiers it had dropped or reinforce them with ground troops.

The day that tiefling magic successfully broke the enchantment that kept the City of Flying Stone aloft was a bloody one. Ustraternes fell like a falling star striking the earth, and some say it heralded the end of Arkhosia. Most of the inhabitants died instantly in the crash. Those who somehow survived the impact were buried under the city structures that subsequently collapsed on their heads. As such, possessions such as the *winged bracers*, along with many other dragonborn treasures, remained lost in the rubble. Years of looting have since scattered them across the land.

Adventure Seed

The PCs discover the ruins of Ustraternes, which is a zone in which broken slabs of stone and whole chambers still hover in midair. Perhaps a mighty wizard has recovered and repaired some of the ancient city, and now it serves as his stronghold. One or more of the guards in this keep could be equipped with *winged bracers*. Alternatively, the ruins could hide intact chambers and buildings, as if an entire neighborhood was buried. Searching these ruins might produce dragonborn artifacts such as *winged bracers*, as well as run-ins with new and monstrous inhabitants.

Winged Bracers Level 12+

With these ornate bracers on your arms, you can glide safely down from great heights.

Lvl 12 13,000 gp
Item Slot: Arms
Property: When you leap down at least 4 squares (rather than fall accidentally), you can fly 8 squares at any point before you hit the ground. This flight cannot take you upward. If you fall for more than 1 round (see *DMG* 48), you can fly 8 each round as a free action. You do not take damage from this fall.

Fleetrunner Boots

Many dwarves would rather be mauled by an owlbear than admit to being slow on their feet. The tactical advantage of speed, however, is something they cannot ignore. As such, dwarf armies set their wizards to the task of crafting magic boots that not only gave their kin more accuracy while running, but also stabilized their movement. Such footwear offered elite dwarf soldiers greater mobility. Dwarf bolters employed these boots to great effect by using them to attack just outside the range of most thrown weapons and magical powers while remaining well within crossbow range. It was only after enemy wizards studied these boots that the tactical advantage was lost. Ever since then, *fleetrunner boots* have appeared among elite soldiers of all races who use hit-and-run tactics.

Fleetrunner Boots Level 5+

The owner of these boots is gifted with unprecedented mobility in combat.

Lvl 5 1,000 gp Lvl 25 625,000 gp
Lvl 15 25,000 gp
Item Slot: Feet
Property: Running gives you only a –2 penalty to attack rolls.
Level 15: When you run, you can move up to your speed + 6, instead of your speed + 2.
Level 25: Running causes you to grant combat advantage only to the next creature to attack you.

Ghoststride Boots

It is said that scouts and spies who were captured, tortured, and killed after being discovered infiltrating enemy lands wore boots such as these. This offers a small explanation as to the mysterious nature of these boots. More than a few owners claim to feel eerily "thinner" while running, as if their bodies somehow have less substance. More than one delver who wears *ghostride boots* has reported that attacks that should have hit instead harmlessly passed through the body. Regardless of whether the ghost stories that follow such boots are true, no wearer can deny that moving quickly in them renders the wearer insubstantial long enough to mitigate successful attacks. Some claim to sense the presence of the original owner in times of great need, when the boots allow the user to escape hastily despite difficult terrain.

Ghoststride Boots Level 6+

These tattered gray boots have a haunting aspect, granting you the elusiveness of a ghost when you need it.

Lvl 6 1,800 gp Lvl 26 1,125,000 gp
Lvl 16 45,000 gp
Item Slot: Feet
Property: While you are running, you gain a +1 item bonus to AC and become insubstantial.
Level 15: +2 item bonus.
Level 25: +3 item bonus.

Giantkind Gloves

For decades, explorers spoke of a kobold that stood at the cliff entrance of its labyrinthine home and single-handedly hurled boulders down at those who attempted to scale the precipice. Intruders were knocked off their ropes one by one until they finally gave up the task. Time and again, adventurers faced the same opposition, eventually from multiple kobolds who possessed the same awesome strength. Attempts at magic flight fared similarly, since rocks knocked flying wizards and carpet-riding warriors out of the sky. The story seemed implausible until years later. After the kobolds vacated the mountain for a less troublesome lair, explorers deciphered a wall of Draconic runes depicting the unsuccessful raids. Behind the runes a pair of *giantkind gloves* was hidden. Despite the origin of these gloves, all who desire giantlike strength now covet them.

Giantkind Gloves Level 4+

The leather of these gloves was harvested from hide-bearing natural beasts of giant size.

Lvl 4 840 gp Lvl 24 525,000 gp
Lvl 14 21,000 gp
Item Slot: Hands
Power (At-Will): Standard Action. Strength + 2 vs. AC; ranged 6/12; you throw an object 30 lb. or less; 2d6 + Strength modifier damage.
Level 14: Strength + 4 vs. AC; ranged 8/16; 50 lb. or less; 2d8 + Strength modifier damage.
Level 24: Strength + 6 vs. AC; ranged 10/20; 80 lb. or less; 2d12 + Strength modifier damage.
Power (Encounter): Free Action. Use this power when you hit with a melee attack. Add a +2 power bonus to the damage roll.
Level 14: +4 power bonus.
Level 24: +6 power bonus.

Mask of the Eye Leech

Few worldly creatures feel at home in the Shadowfell, and a dark one named Elzma fashioned the first version of this magic item to take advantage of that fact. By using it, she hoped to catch her prey off guard more easily. Elzma became infamous for padding invisibly among her enemies and activating the power of her mask. Even those with darkvision were not safe, especially once enveloped in the dark fog Elzma could generate. The lack of survivors from these encounters allowed Elzma to operate uncontested for years—to command choice assassination jobs and the highest fees. She got a taste of her own medicine when she fell to Tian Bara, a human adventurer who managed to surprise Elzma before she attacked Tian's lord. Tian later commissioned copies of the mask, which he stockpiled. When Tian established a ring of secret agents for his lord, elite members known as Grinning Stalkers wore these masks.

Mask of the Eye Leech — Level 8+

The countenance of this full-face mask changes from expressionless to maniacal when activated.

Lvl 8 3,400 gp
Lvl 18 85,000 gp
Lvl 28 2,125,000 gp
Item Slot: Head

Power (Daily): Standard Action. Make an attack: close burst 1; one creature in burst; Intelligence + 2, Wisdom +2, or Charisma + 2 vs. Will; the target is blinded until the end of your next turn. While the target is blinded, you do not suffer negative effects of blindness and you gain darkvision or low-light vision if the target has either. *Sustain Minor*: Repeat the attack against the target to maintain the effects.
Level 18: Close burst 2; +4 vs. Will.
Level 28: Close burst 3, +6 vs. Will.

Adventure Seed

Player characters can learn about the mask by being subjected to its power—possibly when a a creature with powers dependant on combat advantage wears it. Alternatively, a character might join a group like Tian Bara's. By successfully completing a specific assignment to be recognized as an elite member of the organization, that PC could acquire a *mask of the eye leech*. The mask could instead be a reward from a patron who controls such a secret society.

Periapt of Cascading Health

The followers of Bahamut not only strive to protect themselves with divine power, but they also fortify their bodies against the lingering effects of predatory creatures. Although those who worship Bahamut count the platinum dragon as their divine ally, they do not deceive themselves about the vicious nature of other dragons. This magic item was designed with crippling attacks in mind. Rasiv, a dragonborn fighter loyal to Bahamut, consistently credited his version of this periapt, more than the other items he wore or wielded, for his survival against many opponents. He cited green dragons in particular.

Rasiv once said, "Without this little bauble, I never would have lived to throw my last javelin and fell the noxious beast. It is my most prized possession to which I owe nothing short of my beating heart."

These became famous words when Atahla, an ancient green dragon, sought out the fighter, eager to add this "bauble" to her horde and repay him for the deaths of her children. With her horrifying poisonous breath weapon, the dragon lured the warrior into activating the periapt, leaving him vulnerable to her mind poison later in the battle. Rasiv and all his companions fell to Atahla. The periapt is still rumored to sit atop her hoard, a warning to would-be dragonslayers.

Periapt of Cascading Health — Level 10+

Adventurers feel a little more confident fighting dragons with this bauble in their possession.

Lvl 10 +2 5,000 gp
Lvl 15 +3 25,000 gp
Lvl 20 +4 125,000 gp
Lvl 25 +5 625,000 gp
Lvl 30 +6 3,125,000 gp
Item Slot: Neck
Enhancement: Fortitude, Reflex, and Will

Power (Encounter): Minor Action. You end one condition that a save can end.
Level 20 and 25: You gain a +2 power bonus to all other saving throws you make this turn.
Level 30: Whenever you end a condition with this power, you ignore aftereffects that condition has.

Baldric of Dividing Ranks

In the age of Nerath, Caspin Agundar, a human warlord, looked out across the host he commanded. He realized that, no matter how well he led, his soldiers couldn't just wade through the infantry of the enemy army. To break those ranks, he knew his forces had to suffer serious losses first.

Caspin had been entrenched against an army of invading hobgoblins for weeks while both sides maintained strong supply lines. Neither force showed signs of weakening. As winter approached, Caspin turned his attention toward procuring an item to break the stalemate, which soon yielded a magic baldric.

Much to the concern of his subordinate officers, Caspin insisted on personally using the magic baldric on the battlefield. He drove into the hobgoblin lines as if they were not even there, and he began attacking the artillery behind them. The baldric worked exactly as designed. In his brazen attack, however, Caspin isolated himself from his troops, which still had to break through the hobgoblins without magical aid. Caspin kept fighting until his soldiers caught up with him, which they did just in time to see their commander fall beneath the blades of a hobgoblin swarm.

The sacrifice was not in vain. The Nerathi troops had broken through the enemy flank, and the soldiers were driven to wrath by the death of their leader. By day's end, the hobgoblin army was routed and Caspin was posthumously declared a hero.

Baldric of Dividing Ranks — Level 7+

Foot soldiers ineffectually stumble aside as you stride through battle wearing this baldric.

Lvl 7 2,600 gp
Lvl 17 65,000 gp
Lvl 27 1,625,000 gp
Item Slot: Waist
Property: You gain a +2 item bonus to AC against the opportunity attacks of minions.
Level 17: +4 item bonus.
Level 27: +6 item bonus.

Power (Daily): Minor Action. You can move through squares occupied by minions until the end of your next turn. Your movement provokes opportunity attacks as normal, and you cannot end your move in an occupied space.
Level 27: Your movement does not provoke opportunity attacks from minions.

Flagon of Ale Procurement

Not regarded as the most practical magic item, this flagon nonetheless remains highly sought after. Dwarves revere its powers. The flagon is a holy icon of sorts for their mountain-dwelling people. Legend has it that Moradin was exhausted after putting the finishing touches on dwarves, so he took a break to invent a drink that could slake his enormous thirst and relax his tired mind. Unknown to the thirsty god when he stepped away from the forge, the dwarves he had left unattended looked on. They paid close attention to the ingredients and brewing method, committing the entire recipe to memory. When the dwarves were placed into creation for the first time, they immediately tried to reproduce the drink by divining a means to find the ingredients. Strange as it might seem, this focus set a precedent for dwarves as a hard-working and resourceful people. It helped to establish them as one of the dominant races of the world. Religious scholars have since contemplated whether Moradin planned this event, knowing all along that the first dwarves would watch him.

Flagon of Ale Procurement **Level 5**

Sought by brewers and barflies, this ornate flagon is not one you take away from a dwarf—even to save his or her life.

Wondrous Item 1,000 gp

Property: You know the distance to the nearest alcoholic beverage.

Power (Daily): Minor Action. For five minutes, you know the direction and distance to the nearest source of water within 30 squares of you or the nearest alcoholic beverage within 60 squares of you. If you are a dwarf, you can instead learn the direction and distance to ingredients for alcoholic beverages within 60 squares of you.

Adventure Seed

After orcs raid a dwarf hold, dwarf villagers ask the PCs to recover a *flagon of ale procurement* the orcs stole. Such a quest might involve climbing treacherous mountains, enduring the heat of a lava-spitting volcano, and attacking the orcs who stole the flagon in the first place. The flagon could then be instrumental in locating a hidden underground waterway and elaborate tunnel system the orcs use to raid, making the elimination of the orc threat easier than it would be if the characters had to hunt orcs across the mountains.

Treeform Box

Many centuries ago, Aben Hawkwinter, the prince of a human kingdom, fell in love with Vahlia Alanthia, an emissary that regularly visited the Hawkwinter realm from her neighboring elven lands. Vahlia returned Aben's affections. But Aben's father, King Agel Hawkwinter, started building military outposts on the border of elven ancestral forests. On Vahlia's next visit, she delivered an ultimatum. If Hawkwinter forces did not dismantle the outposts and remove themselves from elven borders, the elves would drive them away. The king refused. He secretly desired elven lands for his growing empire.

A border war soon erupted. King Agel vowed to fight until he won or died trying. He forbade his son from seeing Vahlia, and her conscience prevented her from visiting Hawkwinter lands. Undeterred, Aben began spending from his father's coffers to commission a magic item. He claimed it would enable spies to disguise themselves as trees and infiltrate the elven realm. When the resulting box was completed, Aben took it "to test it." While doing so, he secretly began searching for Vahlia, fighting off but never killing any elven resistance he faced.

When Vahlia heard about Aben's efforts, she sought out her lover and urged him to stop. Aben would not relent, knowing that his father would never back down from the war. Aben feared he would die without fulfilling his desire to be with Vahlia. She shared his fears.

Vahlia took the magic box, and she augmented the enchantment. If Aben maintained the tree disguise, his aging would slow until such time as they could be together in peace. After creating an identical box for herself, Vahlia slowed her own aging to a lesser degree. She and Aben begot multiple half-elf children over the course of centuries. All these children kept the location of their parents a secret. It was through the Hawkwinter children that copies of the *treeform box* came into the wider world.

Treeform Box **Level 10**

A leaf placed into this small wooden box does not decompose.

Wondrous Item 5,000 gp

Power (Daily ✦ Polymorph): Standard Action. You and your gear transform into a tree matching the leaf stored inside this box. Your tree form can be of a tree that is your age to a tree of your age times 20 years. While in tree form, you can take no actions, and you are considered an object. You are aware of your surroundings, and you remain in tree form until you choose to return to normal form (minor action) or you are reduced to 0 or fewer hit points. While in tree form, you do not age.

About the Author

Kolja Raven Liquette divides his professional time among writing for books, for the D&D game, and for film. Although Kolja has been known to perform on occasion, this happens more by accident than design.

Demonomicon of Iggwilv

Baphomet, the Prince of Beasts

by Robert J. Schwalb

illustrations by Rob Alexander and Arnie Swekel

Theologians and philosophers claim mortals are a threefold union of essences held in a harmonious balance. The body nourishes the mind, the mind nourishes the soul, and the soul gives the body the essence of life.

One cannot deny the body, for with it we perceive our surroundings, and we experience pain and pleasure. We cannot deny the mind, for through it we remember the past, anticipate the future, learn from our mistakes, and know fear, love, and passion. But the soul?

These same authorities tell us souls divide the sentient races from the beasts, suggesting the soul is the province of such races alone. The soul, they say, sets us apart from animals and binds us to morality, granting us self-awareness and the capacity for reflection. It provides our conscience. Yet, if there must be perfect balance between these aspects of mortality, how does one explain the diversity of sentient life—the existence of dragons, other races, minotaurs, and more? If these beings have souls, why, then, do not animals? If they don't have souls, why do we?

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Could it be that the soul is the dream of the hopeful—a deception of religion to mislead us into abiding by the tenets of divine tyrants? They seek to shackle us to a life of servitude and enslavement, to perpetrate a falsehood that empowers the strong and emasculates the weak. In truth, this spiritual essence that lives within us is not a moral compass guiding us to proper choices and virtuous living, but rather it is our true nature. The effect of conscience is nothing more than guilt acquired through long exposure to the lies of priests and their masters. If anything separates you from the beasts, it is your denial about your identity. We are beasts, each one of us, and only by accepting this truth can we be free.

Forces in the world—cruel, carnal, bestial forces—seek to unravel the divine and shatter its works. They struggle to turn mortals against one another and to tear down the works of civilization. The goal is to allow evil and chaos to run free. Such forces are known by many names: Graz'zt, Orcus, Yeenoghu, and others. However, one has an insidious presence that worms into mortal hearts and minds, and deceives them into turning away from righteousness to embrace brutality. This agent of destruction is Baphomet, who is also known as the Prince of Beasts, the Trampler, the Minotaur Lord, and the Horned King. Born from the churning chaos of the Abyss near the dawn of time, Baphomet is the embodiment of savagery, one of nature's most destructive aspects, and the catalyst that looses the beast residing in us all.

Baphomet and D&D

Although Baphomet has real-world roots, one of his first appearances in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game was in 1982's *S4: The Lost Caverns of Tsojanth.* In the second booklet, the module revealed "the mutual hatred of Baphomet and Yeenoghu is legendary, and each strives to overthrow the other." It was also in this adventure that we first find the *Demonomicon of Iggwilv.* A year later, the original *Monster Manual* 2 included Baphomet not as a demon prince, but as a demon lord, a subtle but important distinction. Demon princes control an entire layer; demon lords rule a portion of a layer, or contest another lord or prince's rule of a layer.

Jeff Grubb, in 1987's *Manual of the Planes,* presents Baphomet's layer for the first time. "Baphomet lives at the center of an infinite maze that spans his layer and the layers adjacent to him. The maze is said to change as it passes between the layers. It is rumored to be populated by all manner of minotaurs, some of whom have breath weapons and magical abilities."

As with every other figure of the Abyss and the Nine Hells, Baphomet vanished with the 2nd Edition of the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. It wasn't until Carl Sargent's *Monster Mythology* (1992) that Baphomet returned, this time as one of the interloper gods who insinuated themselves in the "giantish" pantheon. He was a risen tanar'ri lord who exploited minotaurs, seducing them from service to the gods of the giants to serve his machinations against his ancient rival and enemy, Yeenoghu.

Baphomet survived into the 3rd Edition rules. He received small mention in the *Monster Compendium: Monsters of Faerûn* under James Wyatt's ghour demon entry, where Baphomet is described as an abyssal lord. Aside from this reference, the Horned King didn't receive much detail until James Jacobs's "Demonomicon of Iggwilv: Baphomet" in *DRAGON® Magazine* #341, enshrining the Prince of Beasts alongside the other famed and dreaded demon princes. Ed Stark, James Jacobs, and Erik Mona brought us *Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss,* which told us that Baphomet shares his Abyssal layer with a potent and ancient fiend lord named Pale Night. More important, while still lord of the minotaurs, Baphomet is equally concerned with horrific experimentation, and explores the secrets of vivisection, taxidermy, torture, death, and other less savory aspects in the Tower of Science rising from the heart of this layer, the Endless Maze.

Baphomet made the cut with the 4th Edition rules, he is one of the few demon lords mentioned in *Monster Manual.* His appearance there, in this article, in the "Playing Minotaurs" article from *Dragon* #369, and in the 4th Edition *Manual of the Planes,* ensures his place as one of the most active and dangerous figures found in the Abyss. He makes a great 4th Edition villain.

That's because Baphomet is now a driving and depraved influence within civilizations, minotaur and otherwise, subverting and corrupting mortals in his effort to expand his presence in the world. Some of the worst other peoples expect from minotaurs is because of Baphomet. That influence is one of the aspects that works to make minotaurs great bad guys. The demon prince's influence means other humanoids might have reason to work with evil minotaurs. Baphomet himself is also a great target for epic PCs, especially mighty minotaurs who wish to free their people from the demon prince's savage influence.

Description

The Prince of Beasts is a towering horror—a perfect fusion of humanoid and monster. Baphomet has the muscled body of a burly titan. Coarse black hair covers his hide, his feet are cloven hooves, and from his back extends a bovine tail that ends in a stinking tuft of fur. The demon prince has a brutish bull head that is covered in dark fur. Lambent ochre eyes look out from under two outward curving horns engraved with blasphemous sigils. These sigils form phrases so foul, to utter them aloud would forever darken the soul of anyone who hears the filthy words.

Baphomet exults in his muscled physique. He coats his fur with blod fat culled from his victims to accentuate his build. When he dons clothing or adornments, he does so to sate his depraved vanity and augment his appearance. He might wear bracelets, as well as rings in his long tapering ears, his nose, and in the flesh of his torso.

The demon prince dons an iron crown. He rests this crude coronet upon his brow as a sign of his mastery and dominance. On its cruel tines, he impales the heads of his victims, causing the metal to rust from the dripping ichors until orange streaks spread down his face. In battle, the Trampler wields the greataxe *Heartcleaver*. He has notched the blade three times fighting with Yeenoghu, the Beast of Butchery. Baphomet refuses to smooth the blade until his ancient enemy's head joins the others in his collection.

Although the patron of carnality, slaughter, and savage madness, Baphomet is cunning. He uses wit as often as brute strength to undo his foes. Baphomet is not without his weaknesses, though, and the greatest is his pride. Insulting the Prince of Beasts unleashes his rage and hate in a terrifying display of violence. He stomps around venting his wrath, rampaging and destroying anything in his vile reach.

Plying Baphomet with compliments helps to make the demon prince almost reasonable, but the Trampler demands constant flattery—no matter how far-fetched—and utter servility from those who serve him. Baphomet is prone to paranoid delusions, and he kills and devours even the most shameless flatterers in his court. Thus, those serving Baphomet learn quickly to appease the beast to keep their master's temper in check, but not so often as to overexcite his imagination.

Baphomet's combat statistics appear in *Manual of the Planes*.

Baphomet Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana check.

DC 15: Where civilization's light fails to shine, strange religions, weird cults, and vile sects take hold. They prey on the weak and the desperate, and they flourish on fear, anger, and ignorance. Some are born of religious misinterpretations or extremism, but a few are far more sinister—evil masquerading as legitimate faith. When civilization comes to these backwater areas, priests discover the beliefs upheld by a few sects are nothing more than demon worship—practices so profane that the only cure is swift and utter annihilation.

DC 20: A prominent force in the corruption and subversion of mortal communities is the Horned King, Baphomet, known as the Prince of Beasts. A demon lord of the Abyss, he finds the greatest following among minotaurs. His cult is widespread and influential throughout their secluded communities. Numerous minotaurs resist the Trampler's allure, but the cult spreads and grows as its vile cabalists spread the faith. Baphomet's cult threatens to consume the minotaur population with widespread and pernicious demon-worship.

DC 25: Baphomet sees himself as the darkest aspect of nature—as unbridled savagery. This makes him a rival to Yeenoghu. So Baphomet wages war eternal against the Beast of Butchery.

Baphomet has other enemies, many of whom are born from old grudges. In particular, Baphomet despises Graz'zt. The Dark Prince imprisoned Baphomet ages ago, which is a defeat Baphomet is incapable of forgetting or forgiving.

Baphomet's hatred isn't confined to his rivals in the Abyss, though. His greatest enemy in the mortal world is Melora. She is another rival for power over nature, and Baphomet has despised her for eons.

Baphomet sends his forces against his enemies' followers in the mortal world, with only the rarest lulls in violence. He commands his followers to murder Melora's priests and defile her shrines. Minotaurs war with gnolls in Baphomet's name. They foil any of Graz'zt's plots they can uncover.

DC 30: As a demon lord, Baphomet commands a realm in the Abyss called the Endless Maze. He uses the uncertain landscape as he pleases. His realm is filled with tricks, traps, and shifting corridors. Some of the worst creatures found in the Abyss infest the place. At the maze's center stands his labyrinthine palace, the Lyktion, a mighty fortress mirroring the madness defining Baphomet's realm. Within are countless passages, moving staircases, and other pitfalls designed to frustrate, maim, and kill those daring to penetrate his personal demesne.

DC 35: Many myths exist about Baphomet's origins. One story suggests, as a primordial being, he created the minotaurs to war on the gods but was defeated and hurled into the Abyss. Another version tells that he threw himself into the Abyss rather than suffer defeat or imprisonment at the hands of the gods. Some claim he is a fallen god, and others say that the Abyss's infinite evil spontaneously spawned him.

DC 40: The origins of Baphomet's irrational hatred of Yeenoghu might be largely forgotten, but legend speaks of a possibility. When the shard of evil transformed some primordial powers into demon princes, Yeenoghu was one of the first. Lusting for blood, he sided with the primordials against the gods. Baphomet was a primordial with strong ties to the natural world. He fielded his own savage armies. In a battle against Kord, Erathis, Melora, and Pelor, among other gods, Baphomet found himself fighting alongside gnolls and demons under the command of Yeenoghu. But as the tide of battle turned, Yeenoghu quit the field, leaving Baphomet alone and outmatched. The Horned King turned from the battle not in cowardice, but to chase his betrayer into the depths of the Abyss. Perhaps this is why Baphomet's paranoia is also legendary.

Baphomet's Ambition

Baphomet longs to rule over the natural world, where his savagery can be expressed in an unfettered way. He devotes much of his resources to this front. His black soul burns for Melora's head to place on his crown, and her heart to consume. Minotaurs and others that follow the Horned King take pains to spread over and defile the natural order, making an enemy of any who serve Melora. Baphomet's worshipers destroy any of Melora's holy places they find, slaying almost all who live there. Almost all, because they have a tradition of sparing one follower in six—usually the weakest. They leave the lucky victim maimed and mutilated, but alive, as a warning of what offending the Trampler brings.

The Abyss is no stranger to conflict, but the battle lines shift with the ambitions of the princes who rule. One constant, however, is the war between Baphomet and Yeenoghu. This unrelenting and costly conflict consumes at least half of each demon lord's attention and resources. The Prince of Beasts' obsession with defeating his rival exceeds reason. He has taken disastrous risks in defeating his ancient foe. The Beast of Butchery reciprocates in full.

Part of Baphomet's inability to forge lasting alliances stems from his intense paranoia and vanity. His supreme arrogance disallows him from making concessions to allies, and when he does, resentment clouds common sense, eventually resulting in a stunning betrayal. He has crossed dozens of evil beings, ensuring little chance of finding help if his enemies come knocking with power enough to defeat him.

Gnolls and minotaurs clash with spectacular violence, fighting until one or both sides find utter destruction.

After several invasions into each other's realms, each time ending in an almost crippling defeat, the two have learned. They now fight on different battlefields, where the fate of each can be decided through proxies. Often, these battles unfold on undeclared layers of the Abyss, with savage minotaurs squaring off against demonic gnolls until nothing but carnage and carrion remains.

Just as Baphomet sends his hordes against Yeenoghu's in the Abyss, so does he demand his cabalists and cultists fight the gnolls in the mortal world, whether they serve the Beast of Butchery or not. Gnolls and minotaurs clash with spectacular violence, fighting until one or both sides find utter destruction.

Although his hatred burns hottest for Melora and Yeenoghu, Baphomet has earned other enemies as well. He has had a long-standing grudge against both Graz'zt and Orcus, each of whom imprisoned him for a time. As much as Baphomet craves retribution, he knows he cannot mount a proper offensive in these cases. He cannot leave himself open to attack to indulge in vengeance against powerful demon princes.

Aspect of Baphomet

When concerns in the mortal world draw his attention, Baphomet might send forth his aspect to attend his followers and reinforce his hold on the world.

Description

The aspect of Baphomet is a hideous mass of fur, horn, and muscle. Reminiscent of a minotaur in shape and build, it towers over even the savage minotaurs. Black fur covers its muscled body, and its bovine head is scarred and pitted, with pale blue eyes, and great horns framing a monstrous face.

Aspect of Baphomet	**Level 22 Elite Brute**
Large elemental humanoid (demon)	XP 8,300

Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +22; darkvision

Blood Ground aura 3; a creature in the aura that makes a melee attack against a bloodied target gains a +3 bonus to damage rolls, and a bloodied creature that makes a melee attack gains a +5 bonus to damage rolls. The two bonuses stack.

HP 508; **Bloodied** 254; see also *ferocity*

AC 36; **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 33

Saving Throws +2

Speed 8 (earth walk)

Action Points 1

⊕ **Greataxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +26 vs. AC; 3d6 + 8 damage (crit 9d6 + 26).

Slashing Horns (minor 1/round; at-will)
Reach 2; +26 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 damage, and slide the target 2 squares.

Brutal Charge (standard; at-will)
The aspect of Baphomet charges a creature and makes the following attack in addition to the normal melee basic attack: +24 vs. Fortitude; 3d12 + 8 damage, slide the target 2 squares, and the target is knocked prone.

Bellow (immediate reaction, when first bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Fear, Thunder**
Close burst 2; +24 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 7 thunder damage, push the target 2 squares, and the target is dazed until the end of the aspect's next turn.

Bloodied Outrage (standard; usable only while bloodied; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
The aspect of Baphomet makes two greataxe attacks. If both attacks hit the same target, the target is dazed (save ends).

Ferocity (when reduced to 0 hit points)
The aspect of Baphomet makes a melee basic attack as a free action.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common

Skills Athletics +24, Intimidate +20, Nature +22

Str 27 (+19)	**Dex** 25 (+18)	**Wis** 23 (+17)
Con 24 (+18)	**Int** 17 (+14)	**Cha** 19 (+15)

Equipment greataxe

Aspect of Baphomet Tactics

The aspect of Baphomet seeks out battle, flinging itself into its enemies using *brutal charge*, and smashing through those still standing with its terrible greataxe and *slashing horns*. Should the aspect fall to 300 or fewer hit points, it *bellows* and charges on its next turn. The aspect of Baphomet knows only its rage and it fights until all its enemies lay dead or it is slain.

Aspect of Baphomet Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana check.

DC 25: Minotaur cabalists sometimes conjure a dread spirit, which is a massive, hulking minotaur believed to be a shadow of the Horned King.

Exarchs of Baphomet

Baphomet rewards his greatest servants with a measure of his power, raising them up to serve as exarchs. Like other demon princes, Baphomet has a number of loyal servants, and Asterion and the Misbegotten are among his most fearsome.

Asterion

Thief of the Maze, Asterion prowls the corridors and galleries of the Endless Maze searching for treasures left by those who fall victim to Baphomet's cruel traps and beasts.

Description

Asterion could pass for an ordinary minotaur if not for the extensive and shifting tattooing all over his body. Standing just over 7 feet tall, he has chestnut brown fur on his head and upper shoulders, but the rest of his muscled body is hairless to better display the markings on his skin. His horns emerge from the sides of his head, white at the base, and darkening to crimson at the points.

His body tattoo maps the Endless Maze, covering where Asterion stands at the time and for miles all around. As he moves, the tattoo shifts in such a way that the location at which the exarch

stands is in the center of his chest. Knowing this, Asterion conceals much of his body with hide armor fashioned from human skin, with his arms emerging through stretched mouths forming shoulder plates.

Asterion **Level 26 Elite Skirmisher**
Medium elemental humanoid (demon), minotaur XP 18,000

Initiative +21 **Senses** Perception +25; darkvision
HP 482; **Bloodied** 241
AC 42; **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 38
Resist 20 variable (3/encounter)
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8; phasing
Action Points 1

⊕ **Neckfinder** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+31 vs. AC; 1d10 + 9 damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

Charnel Onslaught (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Asterion makes two *neckfinder* attacks, and can shift after each.

Headstealer (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Bloodied targets only; +32 vs. AC; 4d10 + 9 damage. If this reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target has taken grievous wounds to its neck and takes a -5 penalty to death saving throws until it has greater than 0 hit points.

Goring Charge (standard; at-will)
Asterion charges; +31 vs. AC; 3d6 + 9 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Combat Advantage
When Asterion hits an enemy he has combat advantage against, he can shift 3 squares after the attack as a free action.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Athletics +27, Intimidate +26, Stealth +24
Str 29 (+22) **Dex** 22 (+19) **Wis** 20 (+18)
Con 25 (+20) **Int** 14 (+15) **Cha** 26 (+21)
Equipment hide armor, 2 battleaxes

Asterion's Tactics

Asterion wields two vicious axes equipped with razor-sharp blades perfect for lopping off heads. He uses *charnel onslaught* to attack multiple opponents, ensuring as many enemies as possible take the ongoing damage of *neckfinder*. He keeps the company of powerful savage minotaurs, and he uses them to keep his enemies busy while he slips in to sever the heads of bloodied foes.

Asterion Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana check.

DC 25: The Thief of the Maze was once mortal, and he was a cruel and cunning minotaur seeking to profit from association with the Prince of Beasts. Having little interest in teasing out the magical mysteries of the cult, he instead championed his master by leading enemies into a maze of his own devising and ambushing them as they tried to find their way out. For his efforts, Baphomet opened a portal to the Endless Maze in Asterion's personal labyrinth, luring the minotaur through to serve the demon prince personally.

DC 30: As a reward, Baphomet inscribed a map of the Endless Maze into his exarch's flesh to remind him whom he served and to ensure his constant loyalty. Should Asterion fail him, Baphomet can and will strip the map from Asterion's flesh and cast him out to a dangerous corner of the Endless Maze.

The Misbegotten

Born from Baphomet's diseased imagination and consigned to the depths below his palace, the Misbegotten swells with evil, awaiting its chance to take revenge on its maker.

Description

The Misbegotten is a bloated black worm covered in quivering pustules that give it its distinctive smell. Four thick tentacles, each terminating in a long, smooth horn, frame a tiny head, which is malformed and dripping with putrid ooze from a slobbering maw. The thing makes no sound as it pulls itself across the floor—only issuing a small moan when it kills.

The Misbegotten **Level 24 Elite Brute**
Large elemental magical beast (blind, demon) XP 12,100

Initiative +20 **Senses** Perception +19; blindsight 12
Unholy Stench (**Poison**) aura 3; all creatures in the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls and gain vulnerable 10 acid.
HP 558; **Bloodied** 279
AC 38; **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 37
Resist 20 acid, 20 variable (3/encounter)
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8, climb 6 (spider climb)
Action Points 1

⊕ **Tentacle Rake** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Acid**
Reach 3; +27 vs. AC; 2d6 + 10 damage plus 2d6 acid damage, and the target is grabbed. The Misbegotten can grab up to four creatures at once.

Tentacle Smash (minor 1/round; at-will)
Grabbed creature only; +25 vs. Fortitude; 3d6 + 10 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Threatening Reach
The Misbegotten can make opportunity attacks against any creature in its reach (3 squares).

Corrosive Slobber (standard; at-will) ✦ **Acid, Zone**
Close blast 3; +25 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 9 acid damage, and ongoing 10 acid damage (save ends). The blast creates a zone of noxious smoke that lasts until the end of the Misbegotten's next turn. A creature that starts its turn in or enters the zone takes 10 acid damage, and the zone grants concealment to creatures within.

Wormcrawl (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Acid**
The Misbegotten moves its speed and can move through enemies' spaces, provoking opportunity attacks as normal. When it enters a creature's space (ally or enemy), the Misbegotten makes an attack (+25 vs. Reflex). On a hit, the target takes 2d6 + 10 damage plus 2d6 acid damage, is knocked prone, and cannot stand (save ends).

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Stealth +25
Str 31 (+22) **Dex** 26 (+20) **Wis** 25 (+19)
Con 29 (+21) **Int** 8 (+11) **Cha** 4 (+9)

Misbegotten Tactics

The Misbegotten flows into battle, using *wormcrawl* to crush its opponents and glue them to the floor with the sticky strands of its slime. Its tentacles snake out to snatch enemies and when it grabs them, it smashes them into the floor until they stop wiggling.

Misbegotten Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana check.

DC 30: Baphomet has many diversions, each more terrible than the last. But one of his most appalling entertainments is the creation of new demonic forms from fiends who disappoint him. The Misbegotten is both his greatest failure and his greatest achievement. So disgusting, so foul was this creation, Baphomet consigned it to the deep tunnels beneath his palace to destroy other twisted abominations he creates. The Misbegotten hungers for its maker, and it crawls the tunnels looking for a way to kill the demon prince.

The Endless Maze

Baphomet commands the Endless Maze as his realm in the Abyss. A massive labyrinth spreading out in all directions, the passages confound those with the misfortune to have to explore the place. Those who come to upper reaches of the Endless Maze find the corridors have no ceilings, but the walls extend hundreds of feet into the air. Climbing or flying to the top afflicts the visitor with weakness and despair, causing many to give up and retreat or fall down to the unforgiving stones below. Those who make it to the top feel the full weight of their journey's futility, because the maze extends all around as far as the eye can see. Those who linger at the top soon attract the attention of demons who like nothing more than to destroy "cheaters."

The open-air maze is but the tip of Baphomet's domain, since staircases arranged throughout the realm lead deeper into the sprawling labyrinth. These send travelers into corridors even more terrible and dangerous, where horrible monsters and nefarious traps lay in wait. Walls move of their own accord, sealing off some corridors while opening new ones. Bizarre flora lurks in the crevices, spewing poisonous spores at passersby.

The subterranean corridors vary in height and width, but 10-foot-wide passages are common. The walls are smooth, cut from dark granite or basalt, but some areas feature walls cut from marble, obsidian, jade, porphyry, and if rumors can be believed, even diamond. The passages might carry travelers to open galleries, where scores of tunnels branch off, or they might constrict until a person has to crawl to make any progress.

The Endless Maze is in better repair the closer one travels to the Lyktion, with smooth walls and little sign of debris, but farther out, malfunctioning traps, streaks of blood, chunks of rotting meat, bones, broken walls leading into spaces between space, and more are common. The Endless Maze also features portals connected to other labyrinths found in the Abyss. According to some planar travelers, there is a portal to every maze in the cosmos. Portals sometimes open in unexpected places, luring creatures from other planes to lose themselves and their lives to the wonders of Baphomet's realm.

The Endless Maze is home to an assortment of terrible creatures. Savage minotaurs and depraved minotaur tribes wander the tunnels in search of

food and plunder. Demons are widespread, with goristros and evistros being the most numerous. The Lost—war survivors, adventurers, or fools who had the misfortune of stumbling into Baphomet's realm—also live in the maze. A few are solitary people who survive against the odds, but gangs of Lost are most common. They are as dangerous as demons.

The Endless Maze serves as something of a testing ground. Before the Prince of Beasts accepts an audience with a mortal servant, he might demand the petitioner seek out and find a specific creature lost in the Maze. Those who return are worthy of Baphomet's attention. Those who don't are forgotten.

Much of the Endless Maze is corridor, but many locations of interest exist in Baphomet's domain. The most important are described below.

Bone Castle: Where thirteen passages breach a smooth stone wall, a field of bleached bones stretches out beneath a rust-colored sky. In the center rises a pale white castle, assembled from thousands of finger and hand bones. It is a delicate and fragile structure built to celebrate or contain the evil of its inhabitant. Few are sure who lives in the castle. No demon wants to approach it, and even Baphomet appears reluctant to draw near it. Some whisper the Bone Castle is home to a being known as Pale Night, the Mother of Demons. Those few who chanced upon the Bone Castle claim to have spied a ghostly figure gliding across the battlements, a shapely and frightening woman whose gossamer strands of white hair conceal her face.

Fields of Brass: Not all who face the Horned King find themselves strapped to his dissection tables, fed to the Misbegotten, or set loose in the corridors. Those who impress him have a slim chance to earn their freedom by fighting for their lives on the Field of Brass. Situated inside an egg-like chamber deep in the maze, the Field of Brass is named for the riveted and interlocking brass plates spread across the gallery's floor. Stained crimson and reeking of death, here Baphomet's champions fight for the pleasure of their profane lord. Stands encircle the arena. At its top is a hideous throne of bronze and bone where the Prince of Beasts can survey the carnage.

The Lyktion: Baphomet's palace hangs suspended in the center of a yawning chasm, held in place by twenty stone and iron staircases that pay no attention to direction or bearing. Each stair ends at a hallway leading into well-maintained passages that extend for miles through the Endless Maze. The Lyktion is a tangle of rooms and corridors—a knot of chambers fused together through Baphomet's sheer malice. Crawling through its twisted passages are broken souls in service to the demon prince; these fiends and mortals are so shattered by their thralldom that they have lost all sense of self and purpose outside their vain master.

Horrid Spire: Overlooking the miles and miles of corridors at the top of Endless Maze is the Horrid Spire, a crooked finger of brass rising from a convoluted nest of twisting corridors, tunnels, and crawlways. The Horrid Spire is Baphomet's retreat, where the demon prince emerges from the depths to survey his kingdom from the tower's ramparts. Baphomet also uses the tower to conduct his research and study, exploring a different deviant pursuit on each tower level. Beneath the tower stretches the Maze of the Misbegotten, a lightless sewer crawling with abyssal vermin, the rare wretched survivor, discarded experiments, and the Misbegotten.

Baphomet's Servants

Baphomet's servants are legion. On his layer, he commands innumerable demons, each selected for their singular viciousness and cruelty. Carnage demons roam the distant tunnels, scouring the endless passages for fresh meat. Balors raise palaces in larger chambers, where they oversee courts of servile and fawning fiends who prostrate themselves before the balors' fiery might. Abyssal dragons lair in the depths and on the upper walls, while glabrezu flit through the toxic clouds, dipping from the cloying mist to snatch the unwary.

Baphomet has a widespread cult in the mortal world. Strongest among the minotaurs, he extends his influence through his thralls. He poisons the minds of their people to turn them to his service, urging them to set aside introspective pursuits and let loose the beasts within. Those who give in to these temptations find the darkness in their hearts growing until they swell with terrible evil, growing larger and more savage on the Abyss's corrupting influence.

Though minotaurs make up the majority of Baphomet's mortal servants, Baphomet has had luck converting other humanoids to his cause. He preys on the frightened and ignorant, filling mortal minds with fear and lust for the power his devoted servants promise. Woodsfolk, exiles, and hermits alike find comfort in the savagery of this dark master, and through them, Baphomet's cults blossom, sometimes drawing entire communities into his fold.

Baphomet's Cult

As an agent of chaos, Baphomet demands little from his followers, preferring to let their madness and brimming evil guide their pursuits. Central to their service, though, is embracing the inner beast. Those new to the cult find their inhibitions weakened until they act without thinking, giving into their darkest desires without thought of consequence. In time, his

followers fall so far they begin to manifest monstrous traits, twisting and mutating into feral versions of their former selves until they bark and howl, shrieking and hooting as they enslave and slaughter.

The minotaurs have long had a strong connection to the Prince of Beasts. Baphomet's cabalists have a great deal more freedom among these people and can often operate in the open.

Outside the minotaur society, Baphomet enjoys a strong, though hidden, following among humans, dwarves, and orcs. These cults bury themselves deep behind layers of secrecy and misdirection to worship and serve as they see fit. Many cults masquerade as charitable organizations or militant arms of established religions such as Erathis and Pelor, and others pretend to be wealthy clubs founded by elite society members. In each case, their masks conceal sinister and subversive organizations who delight in hedonistic expressions of despicable worship, exploring carnality, foul magic, and forbidden lore. Oddly, most Baphomet cults aren't aware of their patron's nature and might see the object of their devotion as an intellectual exercise or manifestation of another deity, such as Melora. Few use the horned goat's head symbol; instead they venerate a severed bearded head preserved in embalming fluids or left to rot on their profane altars.

Although many of Baphomet's cults infiltrate developed societies, lurking in progress's shadows, a movement grows among remote settlements far from the trade routes and caravan roads that act as the arteries of progress. Baphomet's servants spread across the countryside, preying on the natural fears born from the dark and the wilderness. Isolation breeds ignorance, and some of the most violent and open cults in Baphomet's service exist on the fringes of decaying kingdoms and empires.

Symbols for Baphomet vary a great deal. Most know each other by a twisted circular maze awash in blood, a sign favored by minotaurs, who already regard the labyrinth as a holy sign. Where such symbols are more recognizable, followers might use a hand gesture to alert their fellows to their allegiance. A common sign is the bull's horns, wherein one splays the index and little fingers, while folding the middle and ring fingers down, holding them in place with the thumb, which itself juts out, perpendicular to the palm.

Oostarix, Eater of Men

We are all beasts, and only delusion prevents you from seeing the truth.

—Oostarix

Baphomet's cabalists are among the most feared and dangerous of the demon prince's servants because they can often move openly, working their villainy without restraint. In some minotaur settlements, unaligned minotaurs tolerate cabalists as representatives of savagery. Cabalists seize this air of tolerance, and they use it to foment discord and division as they swell their numbers with those minotaurs who succumb to beastly temptations the cabalists so deftly present. Oostarix has attained more than any other cabalist and one day, he might rise to claim his place at his master's side.

Occupation and History

Oostarix clawed his way to power in a cult operating in the minotaur fortress, Patoorn. He proved his worth by eliminating the rival religions at work in the community, snuffing out their followers and weakening their presence until only the cult of Baphomet remained. At the same time, Oostarix removed other obstacles to his own ascent among his fellow cabalists until he claimed his place as Voice of the Beast.

Oostarix gained his moniker on the battlefield. An eager warrior, he leads raids into the settlements of other humanoids to gather slaves and supplies.

After each victory, he devours the enemy leader, sucking the flesh from the victim's bones.

Physical Description

The Eater of Men is a fat minotaur who stands 7 feet tall and weighs around four hundred pounds. He wears a gold ring in his nose and matching rings in his ears.

Oostarix	**Level 18 Elite Controller (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid, minotaur	XP 4,000

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +18
Baphomet's Boon aura 10; allies who start their turns in the aura gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls when charging.
HP 354; **Bloodied** 177
AC 34; **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 32
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1

⊕ **Bonecrusher Morningstar** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fear, Weapon**
+23 vs. AC; 1d10 + 9 damage, and the target is weakened until the end of Oostarix's next turn.

Goring Charge (standard; at-will)
Oostarix makes a charge attack: +23 vs. AC; 2d6 + 9 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Savage Infection (standard; at-will) ✦ **Charm, Psychic**
Ranged 10; +22 vs. Will; 1d6 + 7 psychic damage, the target takes ongoing 5 psychic damage and at the start of the target's turn it makes a melee basic attack against one random adjacent creature (save ends both). If this attack hits, it deals normal damage and the target of the basic attack gains the same condition (save ends).

Unholy Flood (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ✦ **Necrotic**
Close blast 5; +22 vs. Will; 1d10 + 7 necrotic damage, and the target makes a melee basic attack against one of its adjacent allies as a free action. *Miss:* Half damage, and the target does not make an attack.

Ferocity (when reduced to 0 hit points)
Oostarix makes a melee basic attack.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Dungeoneering +16, Intimidate +20, Nature +18, Religion +18

Str 28 (+18)	**Dex** 12 (+10)	**Wis** 15 (+11)
Con 25 (+16)	**Int** 18 (+13)	**Cha** 23 (+15)

Equipment robes, morningstar, Baphomet symbol

Attributes and Skills

A natural leader, Oostarix excites the savage beast in his followers, impelling them to fight harder and blinding them to the risks to attain a complete and total victory. He's not one for subtleties; he commands through fear and dogma.

Values and Motivations

Oostarix wants to claim his place at Baphomet's right hand. To do so, he must amass a vast following of mortal servants to prove his worth to the Horned King. He cares for nothing else.

Distinguishing Features

Every inch of Oostarix's body features complex tattooing and scarring, each puckered and oozing with corruption. He traces the patterns without thinking, running a nail along the marks and plucking at the loosened scabs to let the blood and pus flow freely.

Using this Villain

Not one for long-term planning or thinking, Oostarix leads his forces on the offensive, spreading death and destruction wherever he goes. The Eater of Men's tactics and mannerisms make him a despicable villain, one easy for the players to hate and stand against. Therefore, play up his monstrous tendencies by having him devour the PCs' allies and companions to evoke their outrage and hook them into a protracted campaign to thwart the cultist's plans and put an end to his evil.

Knights of the Horned King

Horned King! Remove the veil of deception and reveal unto us the true nature of mortality!

The Prince of Beasts has much to offer mortals. Through service to the Trampler, the mortal can escape the bonds of guilt, be freed from the shackles of society, and unleash his or her true nature. Though opposed by most religions and organizations, the cult of Baphomet flourishes in civilized lands and on its fringes. Foremost of these servants are the Knights of the Horned King, a fanatical and deviant society of learned people who reject the chains of religion and its myriad deceptions in favor of a simpler existence.

The Knights of the Horned King Lore

A character knows the following with a successful skill check.

Religion DC 20: The Knights of the Horned King is a society of philosopher-warriors who oppose Erathis and her church on the grounds that the civilization her priests promote is an abomination and stands at odds with mortals' true nature.

Religion DC 25: The Knights of the Horned King are a cancer within civilization, undermining the authority of the law and dismantling progress in a destructive way. The Knights select a specific city and slowly infiltrate the community, each member occupying a crucial position among the community's leaders. Once the Knights cripple the community and spread their dark faith, they leave it to rot and move on to the next.

Organization

The Knights of the Horned King is a known institution, though the identities of its members remain hidden to prevent compromising the group's objectives.

Leader: The organization is small and exclusive, so power resides in the hands of one leader, Virina Tabois, the powerful and dangerous mind who first founded this sinister society. Her role within the Knights is largely unknown outside its members, and she conceals her purpose by acting as a priestess of Erathis, the god she, in truth, viciously opposes.

Headquarters: The Knights of the Horned King do not have a permanent headquarters. Instead, when they select a city to destroy, they raise a small temple in a cellar, vault, or similar place where they perform hideous ceremonies without attracting attention. Once the city is ruined, the Knights dismantle the temple, taking their relics and trappings to the next settlement.

Hierarchy: Given the nature of their spiritual allegiance and their long-standing opposition to law, the Knights do not abide by a formal hierarchy. Aside from their leader, all are equal in the eyes of the Horned King. Commands come down directly from Tabois, and each member knows his or her place. Any with the courage and strength can try to supplant Tabois as the new leader, but all who have tried met a grisly end.

Members: Two levels of membership exist within the Knights. Full members understand and accept their allegiance to the demon prince and commit their lives and souls to spreading his filthy presence throughout the world. The rest are tools—useful individuals whose loyalty comes at the price of favors, coin, fulfillment of desires, and social advancement. These unwitting agents have no idea about the Knights or their purpose and are almost always counted among the casualties when the community disintegrates.

Baphomet's Fiends

Demons, shrieking and cackling insane humanoids, and malformed creatures that defy description roam the endless passages and corridors of the Endless Maze.

Knight of the Horned King **Level 11 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 600

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +5
HP 112; **Bloodied** 56
AC 27; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 23
Speed 5

⊕ **Battleaxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+18 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the knight's next turn.

Maze of Madness (free, when target marked by the knight moves or makes an attack that does not include the knight; at-will) ✦ **Fear, Weapon**
+18 vs. AC; the triggering creature; 1d10 + 5 damage, and the target takes a –4 penalty to Will and the knight can slide the target 1 square as a free action at the start of the target's turn (save ends).

Mark of the Beast (standard; encounter) ✦ **Fear, Psychic**
Two targets; close blast 3; +16 vs. Will; the target is stunned (save ends).

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common
Skills Arcana +10. Intimidate +11
Str 21 (+11) **Dex** 15 (+7) **Wis** 10 (+5)
Con 16 (+8) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 18 (+9)
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, battleaxe

Coflizu

Massive swirling clouds of torn flesh and crimson droplets coalesce in areas where demons have been butchered.

Coflizu Tactics

The coflizu lashes out with a *blood tendril* to infest the closest enemy, transferring a bit of itself into its foe. While the enemy deals with the infestation shredding its body and mind, the coflizu moves to rip through its remaining opponents with *rending fangs* and *blood tendril* attacks.

Coflizu	Level 23 Skirmisher
Huge elemental magical beast (demon, swarm)	XP 5,100

Initiative +22 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision
Seething Mass aura 2; the coflizu makes a basic attack as a free action against each enemy that begins its turn in the aura.
HP 216; **Bloodied** 108
AC 37; **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 32
Resist 20 fire, half damage from melee and ranged attacks; **Vulnerable** 10 against close and area attacks
Speed 8, fly 4 (hover)

⊕ **Rending Fangs** (standard; at-will)
Reach 3; +25 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 7 damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

Blood Tendril (standard; at-will) ✦ **Charm**
Reach 3; +25 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 9 damage. The coflizu takes 10 damage and the target takes ongoing 10 damage and, at the start of the target's turn, roll 1d6 to determine whether the coflizu chooses the target's move action (1-3) or the target's standard action (4-6) (save ends both).

Fiendish Flow (move; at-will)
The coflizu shifts 4 squares.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +25

Str 16 (+14)	**Dex** 29 (+20)	**Wis** 19 (+15)
Con 24 (+18)	**Int** 4 (+8)	**Cha** 12 (+12)

Coflizu Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana check.

DC 25: Wherever demonic corpses collect, a coflizu is bound to form from the loosed energy and the raw malice latent in their rotting remains.

Encounter Groups

A coflizu regards any creature it encounters as an enemy, so it attacks any it can catch. Where found in a group, a coflizu is as much of a threat to its allies as it is to its enemies.

Level 23 Encounter (XP 25,500)
- ✦ 1 coflizu (level 23 skirmisher)
- ✦ 1 marilith (level 24 elite skirmisher)
- ✦ 2 hezrous (level 22 brute)

Kalaka

Baphomet creates kalakas from mortals he subverts and kidnaps, remaking them to ensure their obedience and loyalties in their new roles as protectors of his realm.

Kalaka Tactics

The kalaka uses its glaive to drive its enemies into the teeth of its allies. Once the kalaka takes a hit, it uses *unexpected reinforcements* to punish its foes before pressing its attack with its glaive.

Kalaka	Level 9 Soldier
Medium elemental humanoid (demon)	XP 400

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +6; truesight 5
HP 108; **Bloodied** 54
AC 25; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 20
Resist 10 variable (1/encounter)
Speed 5

⊕ **Glaive** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +16 vs. AC; 2d4 + 6 damage, and slide the target 1 square.

Unexpected Reinforcements (standard; encounter) ✦ **Conjuration, Weapon**
Ranged 5; the kalaka conjures up to four duplicates of itself, which appear in four unoccupied squares in range. The kalaka and each duplicate make a melee basic attack. At the end of the kalaka's turn, choose a duplicate or the original kalaka to remain. Remove the rest from play.

Spewing Death (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Acid**
Close burst 1; +14 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 4 acid damage, and the target is blinded until the start of its next turn.
Miss: Half damage and the target is not blinded.

Flawed Creation (while bloodied)
The kalaka takes ongoing 5 damage.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal
Skills Athletics +14, Endurance +13

Str 20 (+9)	**Dex** 14 (+6)	**Wis** 15 (+6)
Con 18 (+8)	**Int** 9 (+3)	**Cha** 11 (+4)

Equipment plate armor, glaive

Kalaka Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana check.

DC 15: Kalakas are created from mortal humanoid thralls abducted from the world and remade to serve the Prince of Beasts in the Endless Maze. Each creature is unique in appearance, and each suits Baphomet's mood and caprice at the time of its making.

Encounter Groups

Kalakas are foot soldiers used to fight Yeenoghu's and Baphomet's other enemies. Often, these demons form up into small squads to hunt down escapees, repair tunnels, or maintain traps.

Level 13 Encounter (XP 4,000)

- ✦ 8 kalakas (level 9 soldier)
- ✦ 1 minotaur cabalist (level 13 controller [leader])

Perditazu

These fiends take shape from captured souls of mortals who died while trapped in the Endless Maze. They roam the passages and corridors in search of the escape denied them in life.

Perditazu Tactics

The perditazu charges the closest enemy and uses its *essence claws* attack to injure its foe. On a hit, it teleports to a space adjacent to a softer foe such as a controller or leader. Once it engages its new enemy, the perditazu attacks using *mind maze*, vanishing into the body of its prey and imprisoning it in a maze of delusion.

Perditazu Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana check.

DC 20: Called maze demons, these fiends are the vestiges of those demons and mortals who became lost in the Endless Maze and never found their way out. Driven mad, they live on in an accursed state, seeking to possess their victims and reduce them to their same state.

Perditazu (Maze Demon) **Level 12 Lurker**
Medium elemental humanoid (demon, undead) XP 700

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision
Confounding Presence (**Psychic**) aura 2; any enemy starting its turn in the aura is dazed.
HP 92; **Bloodied** 46
AC 27; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 24
Resist 10 variable (2/encounter)
Saving Throw +5 against charm or fear effects
Speed 8

⨁ **Essence Claws** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fear, Teleportation**
+17 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, the target takes a -5 penalty to its Will defense (save ends), and the perditazu can teleport 5 squares provided it ends its movement in a space adjacent to an enemy.

Phantom Assailants (minor 1/round; at-will) ✦ **Fear**
Close burst 1; +15 vs. Will; the target makes a melee basic attack against an adjacent ally as a free action.

Mind Maze (standard; encounter) ✦ **Psychic**
+15 vs. Will; the target is dazed, and the perditazu enters the target's space and vanishes into the target's body (save ends both). Remove the perditazu from play. Each round, on the target's turn, it takes 2d6 + 5 psychic damage unless it moves its speed. *Aftereffect:* The target takes 10 psychic damage, and the perditazu appears in an unoccupied space of its choice adjacent to the target.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal
Skills Stealth +14

Str 15 (+8)	**Dex** 16 (+9)	**Wis** 18 (+10)
Con 14 (+8)	**Int** 21 (+11)	**Cha** 9 (+5)

Encounter Groups

The perditazu stalk their prey, following them through miles of corridor until their targets face another foe. The perditazu fight independently, and what aid they give other demons is purely circumstantial.

Level 13 Encounter (XP 4,100)

- ✦ 1 perditazu (level 12 lurker)
- ✦ 2 vrocks (level 13 skirmisher)
- ✦ 3 mezzodemons (level 11 soldier)

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb is a freelance game designer for Wizards of the Coast, and he's contributed design to the Forgotten Realms Player's Guide, Draconomicon: Chromatic Dragons, Manual of the Plane, Martial Power, Demon Queen's Enclave, Player's Handbook 2, and numerous articles for D&D Insider. Robert lives in Tennessee with his lovely wife Stacee and a herd of gelatinous half-fiend shadow cats.

Robert would like to thanks James Jacobs for his inspirational and terrifying work on Baphomet and the other demon princes featured in the pages of Dragon Magazine. Man, you left some big shoes to fill.

Io'vanthor

The Lost City of the Dragonborn

by Robert J. Schwalb

illustration by Lars Grant-West ✦ cartography by Robert Lee

"Dragon jewels, you ask? Jewels indeed—seven brilliant cities strung on a necklace stretching across what is now the Trackless Wastes. Seven cultural pillars supported the ancient Arkhosian empire. War and treachery shattered each and now all are dust and ash and windswept ruins. You don't have to tell me of the rumors, because I've heard them all. Some say the cities live on after a fashion, but the dragons and their kin picked them clean, leaving behind rubble and memories. Only one survives still, but even it is a pale shadow of its former glory. Io'vanthor is its name. City of the Dragon God, seat of the Golden One, and witness to the greatest betrayal since the Nameless One fell in the Astral Sea. It is no place to seek, even though treasures abound, for tales speak of a haunted ruin—a tangled maze of streets and sagging structures all slick from glittering waterfalls tumbling down the dark side of the brooding mountain on which it stands.

I see the avarice in your eyes: indeed, you could grow wealthy from exploring its depths, but what good is platinum if you and yours are dead? Do you think to stroll in through its shadowed arches, navigate the crumbling streets, and unearth antiquity's secrets? If so, you are a bigger fool than I thought. Darkness rules Io'vanthor—evils profound in power and dire in scope have control. It is a place of doom and death, and only the insane and suicides would dare climb its bloodied steps. Pray to Ioun, friend, for her wisdom will reveal the folly of your quest. Realize every ruin in Io'vanthor holds danger, and every passage holds the promise of death. Let the dead rest. Seek another path, not just for the sake of your lives, but also for your very souls.

—Vyen, Sage of Wellspring

Far to the south, lost in the Trackless Wastes, rises a dun mountain, its once-jagged peak softened by relentless winds and scouring sands. Long ago, Io'vanthor stood for culture, innovation, and the rule of law, but treachery, corruption, and fathomless evil sullied its magnificent name. Wickedness reigns where once the Golden One ruled. Infernal legions, hellspawned kobolds, and aberrant abominations prowl its depths and battle for dominance on the steps where dragonborn philosophers debated the finer points of duty and honor. Death stalks its shadowed passages and defiles the memories and legends haunting it still. Nothing good comes from Io'vanthor, and those who roam its twisting streets and explore its shadowy ruins find only doom.

Io'vanthor Lore

A character can learn the following information with a successful History check.

History DC 15: Io'vanthor's origins are steeped in myth, making it difficult to separate fact from fiction. Some legends claim Io'vanthor was the earthly palace of Io, while others suggest the Golden One, the great dragon who stood against the darkness in Bael Turath, forged an empire on its slopes. Whatever was the case, most agree Arkhosia solidified into an empire at this city, uniting the petty kingdoms and independent city-states under one noble banner.

History DC 20: From this city the Golden One, with the support of the noble dragons and his dragonborn general Surina Moonscale, set the Empire of Arkhosia on its course of war against Bael Turath, and as long as Io'vanthor stood, the dragons and dragonborn were united by the great city's glorious legacy. Yet as decades of conflict piled up into centuries, dissent and unrest wracked both sides, fomented by sinister cultists bent on escalating the violence and fought by people sickened by appalling loss and genocidal intent. As the war ground on, Bael Turath's tactics poisoned the dragon lands, and not long after, verdant forests withered, lakes dried up, and the great empire became desert. In the end, the tieflings' excesses and depthless cruelty propelled both nations to their ends, and leaders, demagogues, and soldiers beyond counting perished in the tragic end that closed the tales for both nations.

History DC 25: Many believe Io'vanthor and the other city-states fell because of the sudden and destructive change in the climate brought on by the tieflings' blasphemous rituals. No one questions that the magic the tieflings wrought sounded Arkhosia's death knell, but Io'vanthor's ending stemmed from a disastrous and unsuspected source.

The trouble began when Arkhosia banned Tiamat worship across the empire and made it an offense punishable by exile or death. The decree enraged the dark goddess, and she and her followers plotted vengeance. While the dragons and dragonborn concerned themselves with the tieflings, her cultists infiltrated the dragonborn cities, spreading dissent and seducing the naïve and unwary with promises of power and quick victory. Her cults thrived and grew while Arkhosia's eyes focused abroad. With them came darker and more sinister elements—servants of rival powers who sought similar ends. Worship of Bane, Torog, and no few archdevils spread and took hold, rotting the empire from within.

Of all the seven cities, Io'vanthor suffered the worst. With the Golden One drawn away, supporting the soldiers in the field, the city decayed as corrupted dragonborn and treasonous dragons came to power. Their control was so complete that when a small strike force of tieflings buttressed by infernal warriors besieged the city, traitors flung open the gates, believing the invaders would take care of the last holdouts and the cults would in turn take out the invaders. What happened instead was that the Turathi force didn't make any distinctions and soon enslaved the whole city.

History DC 30: Io'vanthor's fall marked Arkhosia's death knell and many historians believe Turathi forces sacked and abandoned the city, leaving it for the sandstorms to erase. In truth, the infernal forces, cultists, and other, darker, creatures never left. They had no reason to. The dragonborn and dragons couldn't retake the corrupted city and Bael Turath was dead. Io'vanthor would inherit the glory of the tiefling empire and a new nation would rise from the ashes of the old. However, lack of resources, infighting, and the splintering of the occupying force into factions bled the city until Io'vanthor began crumbling around the occupiers. Thus, the city rots, and its denizens feast on its bones like maggots in putrefying flesh.

Features of Io'vanthor

Io'vanthor is a terraced city built along the side of a rugged mountain overlooking a vast desert in southern lands. Rising above the barren landscape in defiance of the flesh-ripping sandstorms and the merciless sun, the mountain stands alone in the wastes. The city faces east, so during the first part of the day, the hot sun bathes it, sparkling off the white stone and dancing across the life-giving waters that spill down from the heights. After the sun passes the zenith, the city falls into shadow and the denizens emerge to continue the internecine struggle for command.

Without much of a siege, the city survived the war intact. Damage was largely self-inflicted, with the few loyalists retreating and collapsing ramps and tunnels to escape the swords and spells of their conquerors. Io'vanthor retains its wide streets and graceful arches, featuring leering dragon statues and intricate façades on every pillar, plinth, and wall. The city, in spite of its great age, remains a symbol of dragonborn architectural genius.

Exposure to the elements, though, and an unwillingness and inability to maintain the structures take their toll. The outer walls bear old scars and are dissolving into dust. Aqueducts once carrying the Blood of Io now lay in ruins, with waters flooding homes and shops on the lower tier. Upper tiers and the caverns above bear their own scars of hardship and war, and their silent, empty monuments hold the memories of forgotten greatness.

Defenses

The city's architecture demonstrates how self-defense was the principal concern during Io'vanthor's construction. Flanking the city are the sides of the mountain itself, which are so steep and rugged that no army could ascend without flying. Numerous towers bulge out from the mountain's face, each equipped with catapult platforms, ballista batteries, and other siege weapons to rain death on an enemy host. Trapped tunnels connect each tower to the subterranean depths of the city. In case of a siege, dragons could fly out from cunningly concealed passages in the mountain to slip behind enemy ranks to disrupt supply lines and command units.

Io'vanthor's walls blend dragonborn aesthetic with practicality. Each wall is 20 feet thick and cut from solid stone, but faced with intricate carvings of dragons and draconic imagery. The lowest walls feature dragons at war, while the walls protecting the second tier depict the dragonborn at work constructing the city. The walls at the top recount the myths of Io's fall and rebirth into Bahamut and Tiamat.

Wide staircases on each tier connect the levels. In times of peace, the gates stood open, permitting free passage, but in times of war the stairs could be collapsed and doors sealed shut, creating yet another obstacle for invading armies. Even entering the lowest tier was a challenge, since the dragonborn could drop the switchback ramps that climbed the mountainside, spilling enemy soldiers to their deaths hundreds of feet below.

Even if the city's walls were breached, the citizens would withdraw into the tunnels and chambers cut inside the mountain. Stores of food and cisterns filled with fresh water meant the people could survive for months, and even if supplies ran out, the deeper tunnels offered routes away from the mountain, giving the people a chance to flee while their enemy focused on navigating the traps and fighting the defenders inside.

The deeper tunnels connect to the Underdark, and in these upper chambers the kobold population farms fungus and hunts beetles for food and armor.

Io's Body: Putrescence

The buildings in the lowest tier were protected by a steep wall punctuated by towers and topped with rearing stone dragons. White stone houses crowd the wide streets and the canals that carried the waters of Io's Blood to the private gardens and small farms that produced much of the food for the city.

In case of a siege, dragons could fly out from cunningly concealed passages in the mountain...

Districts

Io'vanthor might be in ruins, but the original districts that stood during the Golden One's rule still stand. Exploring the city under the watchful sun, one can almost hear commerce's echoes in the streets, but when the sun vanishes behind the mountain's peak, the city transforms and assumes a horrific quality one might expect of a city drowning in the wickedness of the Nine Hells.

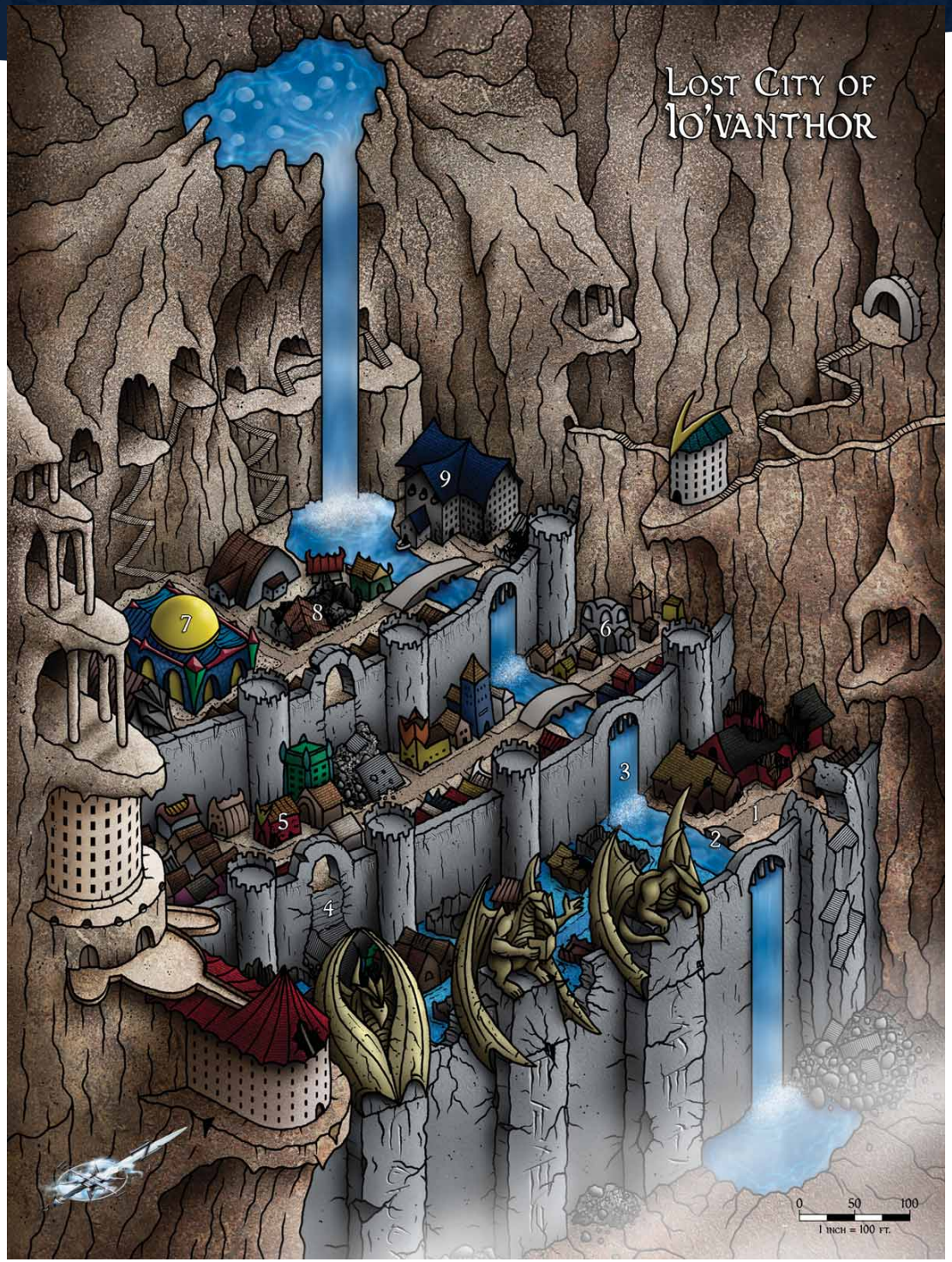
Catacombs

The walls and buildings facing the desert are but a third of the city's actual size, because contained within the great peak are endless corridors, chambers, staircases, meeting halls, temples, shops, and even entire neighborhoods. Near the mountain's base, the poorer citizens lived and worked, often as miners or unskilled laborers. The upper levels housed the city's elite, including great heroes, merchants, dragon nobles, and even the quarters of the Golden One.

The Body of Io is mostly flooded now. The aqueducts that carried the water from Io's Blood ruptured and collapsed, drowning much of the lower levels until the tier stood beneath at least a foot of water. The waters have extensively damaged the homes and shops, and calcified bones of long dead dragonborn stare up at passers-by in their liquid graves.

1. Street of Commerce: This thoroughfare served as the city's main trade artery. People from all over the city came to do business with foreign merchants and local artisans alike. More than a simple marketplace, the Street of Commerce spread for many blocks and represented an uncommon fusion of different cultures, blending elven design with dwarven practicality, human ingenuity with halfling flair. Nearly anything could be had here, from exotic spices from far-flung lands to livestock, bolts of cloth, weaponry, and more.

Now, this street is a jumble of debris, bits of wreckage, broken pottery, and petrified wood created through reckless use of magic. Only the most dedicated search is likely to uncover anything to



suggest the street's importance, but diligence is bound to pay off and old Arkhosian coins, weaponry, and other treasures await discovery in the rubble.

2. Ruined Bridge: The remains of a graceful bridge spans what was once the primary channel for the Blood of Io. The bridge's center collapsed, dropping into the waters below, but enough remains to reveal dragonborn statues on either side holding the structure aloft on their backs.

3. Blood of Io: Even as Arkhosia gave way to the growing desert since seas and lakes and rivers dried up, Io'vanthor was never in peril from drought. A flood of fresh water runs from the peak and down the mountainside. There is no "natural" source for this water; it springs from the rock. According to legend, the waters were the blood of Io, hence the name, and they nourished the city and allowed it to thrive even after the lands around the city became wastes.

In truth, the waters spill from an old portal to the Elemental Chaos long ago buried beneath the rock. They tumble out of the stone and down the mountainside until they gather at a pool. At the pool's bottom another portal waits to drain the water back to the Elemental Chaos. The portals are old and predate the city, and they have offered their bountiful gift throughout Io'vanthor's long existence. However, the portals have begun to malfunction, and elemental creatures slip through the portal to add to the chaos and carnage afflicting the city.

4. Collapsed Stair: Although traitors flung open the gates for the invaders, people still loyal to the Golden One fought the attackers even as they retreated deeper into the mountain. Behind them, they left collapsed ramps and sprung traps to kill and maim the intruders. When the infernal armies flooded the outer walls, the defenders also collapsed the stairs that led to the city's upper tiers. Ruins of these stairs emerge from the flooded tier, covered in slime. Above, the stone doors are gone, sundered by powerful magic long ago.

Io's Heart: Ruin

The second tier held homes for minor officials, officers, merchant princes, and the bulk of the dragonborn citizens that preferred to live apart from the more diverse mix of peoples dwelling on the lower level. Once filled with white-washed houses with tiny gardens and shops, as well as small shrines dedicated to old heroes, exarchs, and minor gods, the Heart of Io is even worse off than the Body of Io.

Centuries of occupation by fiends, kobolds, and worse ruined this district, and here they enslaved the decadent elite and offered them up on bloody altars to sacrifice to their dark masters. Invaders and thieves looted most buildings, and many have collapsed to leave blackened rubble clogging the streets.

5. Shrine of Zepherus: A small shrine dedicated to an ancient dragonborn hero, it rises from the sea of broken and collapsing structures. The shrine encompasses two buildings, with the smaller holding Zepherus's tomb and a massive statue in his likeness: a muscled dragonborn warrior armored in plate and wielding a greatsword. The larger building served as a repository for Zepherus's memoirs. A prolific writer, the hero wrote extensively of his travels and exploits, but also on scholarly subjects—history and geography being the most prevalent. Many tomes found their way into the hands of invaders or were destroyed by incautious looters, but a few remain in hidden vaults or were concealed by devoted attendants before being struck down by swords.

6. Hall of the Founders: This structure escaped the destruction intact because it was spared the worst by magical wards shielding the building from fires, wind, and arson. Although the denizens haunting this city defeated the wards and broke inside long ago, the building is mostly intact.

This was a town hall of sorts, and common dragonborn could air their grievances to the city leaders or, more commonly, their representatives here. Standing three stories tall, the bottom level features a marble floor and matching columns with a dais at the far end where a representative could preside over meetings, dispense justice, and attend to the matters of rule. The upper floors held the bureaucratic offices and storerooms for records and other legal documents.

Io's Soul: Despair

The uppermost tier of Io'vanthor held the offices and palaces of the city's leaders, as well as the esteemed Academy and numerous other official buildings. As well, one can find smaller temples dedicated to Pelor, Erathis, and even Kord, though all are defiled and have been repurposed to honor Asmodeus, Tiamat, or other profane powers. The people that lived here were among the greatest of the city and lived alongside the Golden One and the dragons ruling from the caverns above. The Soul of Io survived the invasion and remains much as it did before the city fell.

7. Temple of the Divided Dragon: Easily the most impressive structure in the Soul of Io is the grand temple. This impressive three-story building is constructed of multicolored stone and fitted with a beautiful dome festooned with images of dragons in flight. Since Io was a force no longer, his essence divided between Bahamut and Tiamat, the temple held numerous initiates that preserved the legacy of the divided god.

The temple held many of the city's artifacts, ancient writings, and treasures that hearkened back to Io'vanthor's first founding. Large halls filled with massive statues of dragons, altars, and quiet places for self-reflection and meditation yawn throughout. The basements contained the vaults, while the upper levels housed the attendants who maintained the building.

A Dragonborn City

A dragon might have ruled Io'vanthor, but it was a dragonborn city. Adventurers exploring the city should see the vestiges of this lost civilization. When describing buildings and artwork, remember that dragonborn have a powerful sense of self and for this reason draconic imagery should appear in the surviving structures, incorporated in nearly every work. Murals, though cracked and faded, celebrate dragonborn heroes, some riding dragons, others defeating humans, elementals, demons, and even giants. Each piece of art emphasizes a dragonborn's qualities, so dragonborn using breath weapons, dragonborn fighting, and dragonborn being victorious are common.

Dragonborn are also clannish by nature. Neighborhoods demonstrate subtle distinctions between the various groups. Most areas include a distinctive sigil worked into the stone to mark a particular territory. Such signs incorporate talon, fang, claw, scale, and other draconic images. In addition, dragonborn all strive to live up to their ancestral legacy and they kept their predecessors' bones and ashes in places of honor. Finally, each clan kept a central hall where members could meet to exchange news, plan for the future, and boast of their exploits.

For more information on dragonborn culture, be sure to review the "Ecology of the Dragonborn" article presented in *Dragon® Magazine* #365.

The devils seized the temple and made it their own. Gone are the chiseled prayers dedicated to the Divided God, removed are the statues of holy saints, and in their place stand blasphemous invocations to archdevils, icons devoted to evil, stained altars, and rooms whose purposes are so foul they defy description.

8. Hall of Judgment: A burned-out shell of a building is all that remains of Io'vanthor's high courts. Here the city kept their histories and laws. Their leaders met to guide the city into the future and make the important decisions regarding the empire's formation and future. Now, though, much of this beautiful building lays in ruin, its roof collapsed and all but two walls collapsed.

9. Academy of Io'vanthor: In addition to being the spiritual and cultural center of Arkhosia, Io'vanthor was also the dragonborn's intellectual heart. The city proudly held the empire's greatest institution of learning. Dragonborn scholars taught students the secrets of alchemy, magic, history, philosophy, and religion within the confines of this enormous structure. Easily half of the academy held lecture halls, but the rest contained housing for students and faculty, kitchens, restaurants, libraries, and more.

The invaders converged on the Academy for the lore it contained and cultists of Tiamat turned against Turathi soldiers and devils as the two bands fought for control over the building. Those teachers and students with the misfortune to be caught between the two were slaughtered, while their precious lore and treasures were consumed by fire. Now, the Academy is a blackened building, the draconic imagery defaced and scrawled with blasphemous graffiti.

Caverns of the Golden One

Looming above the entire city are the Caverns of the Golden One, the reputed hall of Arkhosia's first and last emperor. Unlike the rest of the city, these caverns are natural. However, they contained tunnels that led out to hidden caves that allowed dragons to come and go unseen. In addition, these caves also connected to the lower passages and chambers of Io'vanthor's inner city. Most of these passages collapsed as the defenders struggled to destroy their attackers.

The few dragons who remained while the Golden One fought against Bael Turath were murdered by one of their own and their bones rest here still amid faded scales of gold, silver, gray, and bronze.

Masters and Monsters of Io'vanthor

At certain times of the day, Io'vanthor might appear as empty as any other ruin, but when night falls the city comes to life. Never abandoned, the city's masters are an unwholesome mix of devils, tieflings, kobolds, undead, strange creatures from the Elemental Chaos, and a smattering of dragonborn who have made unconscionable bargains to survive. Each faction vies with others for control over the city, and though the ancient wars have long since quieted, they are reborn each day in this city of death.

The Devils

Called forth from the Nine Hells by Turathi warlocks and diabolists centuries ago, the devils eventually betrayed and slew their masters so that they could seize the city for themselves. A century ago, they nearly succeeded in destroying the other factions, but an unlikely alliance between themselves and the dragonborn renegades saw their bid for power denied. Still, though continually rebuilding after all these years, the devils remain a considerable threat.

Leader: Triellana, a powerful vampiric succubus, commands a swelling force of devils and vampires she spawned from tieflings and dragonborn thralls. After murdering her masters, she took command over the fiends. She has scoured the tomes and scrolls held in Io's Soul for a ritual to draw more devils from the Nine Hells and forge her own empire.

Allies and Enemies: The devils have broken too many alliances to have any allies now. All other factions oppose them, but the devils are strong enough to repulse most attacks from individual factions.

Territory: The devils control most of the Soul of Io, but they fear to ascend into the Chambers of the Golden One. Periodically, they make forays into the tunnels within the mountain in search of relics from Io'vanthor or to launch raids against other factions in the Heart and, rarely, the Body of Io.

Goals: The devils want to remake all Io'vanthor into a mortal city devoted to Asmodeus's glory. They gather magic items they find to disenchant them for residuum so they can fuel the ritual to conjure an infernal army with which the succubus hopes to conquer all the lands surrounding the waste and beyond.

Typical Encounters

Encounters with the devils faction include vampires, devils of all kinds, and a smattering of cambion servants.

Level 7 Encounter (XP 1,500)
- ✦ 1 succubus (level 9 controller)
- ✦ 2 cambion hellswords (level 8 brute)
- ✦ 8 vampire spawn fleshrippers (level 5 minion)

Level 11 Encounter (XP 3,050)
- ✦ 1 redspawn firebelcher (level 12 artillery)
- ✦ 2 bearded devils (level 13 soldier)
- ✦ 6 vampire spawn bloodhunters (level 10 minion)

Tiefling Survivors

Inbred descendants of the tiefling warriors who swept through Io'vanthor, the survivors carry on in spite of the odds, resorting to cannibalism and grim rituals to keep themselves alive. Nearly wiped out by the devils' coup, the tieflings have fought their former servants, even siding with the dragonborn renegades on occasion.

Leader: Kythos, a pragmatic tiefling warlord, commands the tiefling band, and rules with an iron fist. He gained his position by killing and devouring his predecessor—his father. He doesn't care about his fellows, but sees their value in keeping himself alive. If he could forge a private alliance with Triellana, he'd sell out his people without thinking twice.

Allies and Enemies: With a reputation almost as bad as the devils, the tieflings have a hard time making lasting alliances, outside of infrequent and unlikely alliances with the dragonborn. Such cooperative efforts never last long, with one side betraying the other. The tieflings have begun negotiating with the kobolds with mixed success.

Territory: The tieflings control some of the caves and passages inside the mountain as well as ruins in the Heart of Io. They frequently raid kobold holdings in the Body.

Goals: Food is the overriding concern for the tieflings. Lacking anything in the way of agricultural skills, they survive by eating the dead—their own and the bodies of fallen foes. An alliance with the kobolds would be a short-term solution. The tieflings want access to their food stores, and when they find them, they intend to turn on the kobolds and feast on their corpses.

Typical Encounters

Cannibalism has made ghouls from many tieflings and the rest are well on their way to becoming undead horrors. Most encounters feature tieflings, some undead including ghouls and skeletons, and the rare demon.

Level 5 Encounter (XP 1,000)
- ✦ 1 tiefling darkblade (level 7 lurker)
- ✦ 2 tiefling heretics (level 6 artillery)
- ✦ 1 ghoul (level 5 soldier)

Level 9 Encounter (XP 2,100)
- ✦ 1 tiefling darkblade (level 7 lurker)
- ✦ 2 skeletal tomb guardians (level 10 brute)
- ✦ 4 horde ghouls (level 13 minion)

The Inheritor believes the key to his tribe's success is to hatch a dragon egg.

Broken Tooth Tribe

At the bottom of the food chain, the Broken Tooth Tribe claims descent from Io'vanthor's servant class. With the dragonborn lords removed, the kobolds asserted their dominance in the flooded Body of Io.

Leader: The self-titled Inheritor of Io, a cunning kobold wyrmpriest, commands the kobold tribe. Seeing himself as the city's rightful master, he encourages his tribe's growth so the kobolds can swarm over their more powerful enemies.

Allies and Enemies: Few factions regard the kobolds as anything more than a nuisance and most ignore their incredible numbers. The dragonborn renegades and tieflings raid their territory for food and supplies, but the tieflings are interested in forming an alliance, an agreement the Inheritor is reluctant to make. The kobolds fear and oppose all other factions.

Territory: The kobolds control nearly all of Io's Body and have holdings deeper in the mountain and the Underdark as well. Since other factions do not respect the kobolds' claim, the kobolds deal with intruders with swift and deadly force.

Goals: The kobolds want to oust the other factions. They breed at an alarming rate, far faster than they can produce food. The Inheritor believes the key to his tribe's success is to hatch a dragon egg. Scouts leave the city in search of the prize, but those who return bring a strange assortment of eggs, which hatch to reveal drakes, dragonspawn, and other creatures.

Typical Encounters

Although most encounters with this faction involve kobolds, they sometimes employ beetles, drakes, and spiders. They also sometimes use creatures of the desert and the Underdark.

Level 1 Encounter (XP 600)
- ✦ 1 kobold wyrmpriest (level 3 artillery [leader])
- ✦ 2 kobold dragonshields (level 2 soldier)
- ✦ 4 kobold minions (level 1 minion)

Level 3 Encounter (XP 750)
- ✦ 1 kobold slyblade (level 4 lurker)
- ✦ 2 kobold slingers (level 1 artillery)
- ✦ 3 guard drakes (level 2 brutes)

Ghosts of Io'vanthor

Many innocents perished when the city surrendered because the tieflings and their infernal allies were merciless in removing any threats to their control. Many dead dragonborn rose as angry ghosts and haunt the city still, hunting tiefling, devil, and dragonborn alike.

Leader: No one leads the ghosts.

Allies and Enemies: The ghosts are not interested in making alliances.

Territory: Found throughout the city, the ghosts can be encountered anywhere. They surrender the city by day, but emerge at night. Their victims' howls form an unearthly chorus.

Goals: The ghosts want to cleanse Io'vanthor so it, and they, can pass into oblivion. They do not rest until the city is free from all intruders.

Typical Encounters

Adventurers might encounter ghosts while exploring the catacombs, fighting other factions, or even while approaching the city. Any undead creature is appropriate for this faction.

Level 4 Encounter (XP 800)

- 1 rot scarab swarm (level 8 soldier)
- 2 phantom warriors (level 4 soldier)
- 4 decrepit skeletons (level 1 minion)

Level 9 Encounter (XP 2,100)

- 1 wailing ghost (level 12 controller)
- 2 battle wights (level 9 soldier)
- 3 wraiths (level 5 lurker)

Extraplanar Infiltrators

The buried portal to the Elemental Chaos allows creatures from that plane to migrate into the world. For centuries, nothing emerged thanks to the wards protecting the portal, but as the magic has failed, the portal has become unstable and it periodically shunts a surprised and confused creature into the city.

Leader: Like the undead, the elementals have no leader and roam the city, spreading chaos and destruction wherever they go. Should a powerful leader emerge, the elementals could prove a considerable threat to the other factions.

Allies and Enemies: Again, the elementals do not make alliances under most circumstances but various factions have seized control over a lone elemental from time to time.

Territory: The elementals all emerge from the Chambers of the Golden One and most linger nearby, seeking a way back to their native plane. Frustrated elementals, though, might be found anywhere in the city, only to vanish once more when they reach the portal in the pool at the city's base.

Goals: Most elementals would be happiest to return to the Elemental Chaos, but a few turn their malice and rage on the other denizens. These creatures, if not stopped, could succeed where nature has failed, and they could reduce the entire mountain to rubble.

Typical Encounters

Elemental creatures are typically encountered alone or while attacking another creature. Any elemental of an appropriate level would suffice, but most representatives include firelashers, demons, and the occasional slaad.

Level 9 Encounter (XP 2,000)

- 8 evistros (level 6 brute)

Level 9 Encounter (XP 2,000)

- 1 firelasher (level 11 skirmisher)
- 2 fire archon emberguards (level 12 brute)

Cult of Tiamat

Many dragonborn remained in the city after its fall. Some were noble souls, having vowed to save Io'vanthor. Others were opportunists, each seeking to bargain with the tieflings. In the end, the survivors were forced to retreat into the city's depths, where they bided their time while fighting a guerilla war against the invaders.

Tiamat's cult was strong in these survivors and after a generation spent fighting and suffering in the darkness, the dragonborn came to the Dark Lady, offering their souls to the greedy goddess in exchange for her favor. Those who refused were exiled or killed, thus no dissent remains.

Leader: Raskra Moonscale, a dragonborn cleric who claims to be a descendant of the famed dragonborn general who perished in the last days of Arkhosia's war against Bael Turath, leads the cult. Raskra is a devoted servant and hopes to name himself theocrat when he and his kin retake the city. Unfortunately, he's thoroughly mad and is prone to sabotaging his own efforts through rash action and poor tactics.

Allies and Enemies: Inside the devils faction, elements sympathetic to Tiamat's dragonspawn would support the dragonborn in an uprising against Triellana if only Raskra would agree to meet with them—he keeps killing their messengers. The cult sometimes works with the tieflings, but old hatreds still burn hot. The kobolds are nothing more than slaves in need of chains.

Territory: The dragonborn control the deeper tunnels inside the mountain. They regularly raid kobold and tiefling holdings throughout the city and have made a few attempts to reclaim the Chambers of the Golden One.

Goals: As dictated by Tiamat, the cult seeks to regain control over the city. Tiamat tolerated Raskra's eccentricities but his constant failures and erratic behavior are about as much as she can tolerate. Tiamat is considering sending a dragon champion to replace the dragonborn and lead the cult to victory.

Tiamat urges her followers to reclaim the city and declare it for her. Tiamat's mad ambition—defeating

the Golden One and installing a theocracy devoted to her—cost the city its soul and the remaining dragonborn are too few to mount a credible assault against the other factions.

Typical Encounters

Since Raskra refuses to retreat, dragonborn are few. To supplement their meager showing, they employ dragonspawn, enslave kobolds, and bargain with Underdark goblins for aid.

Level 4 Encounter (XP 890)

- ✦ 2 dragonborn soldiers (level 5 soldier)
- ✦ 2 hobgoblin archers (level 3 artillery)
- ✦ 5 hobgoblin grunts (level 3 minion)

Level 11 Encounter (XP 3,100)

- ✦ 2 dragonborn raiders (level 13 skirmisher)
- ✦ 3 dragonborn gladiators (level 10 soldier)

Filthy Lucre and Other Hooks

Io'vanthor is a dangerous city and its streets hold sinister forces, each eager to stake their own claim on the fabled ruins. Facing just one faction could be the plot of an entire adventure, while purging the mountain of the factions and restoring the city to the dragonborn could account for an entire tier of play. How you use the city is ultimately up to you, but the following hooks should help you along.

Accident of Fate

The malfunctioning portal from which spills the city's sole source of water opens onto the Elemental Chaos. Creatures from that plane sometimes slip through to wreak havoc in the city, but adventurers exploring the plane might also find themselves sucked through and in the thick of a multifaceted conflict. If they want to escape the city, the heroes have to negotiate, intimidate, and fight their way through endless hordes.

Recover Ancient Treasure

Since the Turathi armies claimed the city intact, many fabulous treasures await recovery. The adventurers might learn the ruined city is a specific item's resting place. However, finding the city is no small task either, and the heroes have to scour the desert, survive hostile factions, and descend into the mountain's depths if they wish to complete their quest.

Unexpected Shelter

After a brown dragon's attack on a desert caravan of which the PCs are a part, the heroes must flee into the wastes before the beast attacks again. After days of struggling against the oppressive heat and merciless nights, the characters crest a dune and spy the mountain in the distance. Is this ruined city a place of shelter or an even greater menace?

Hunting Dragons

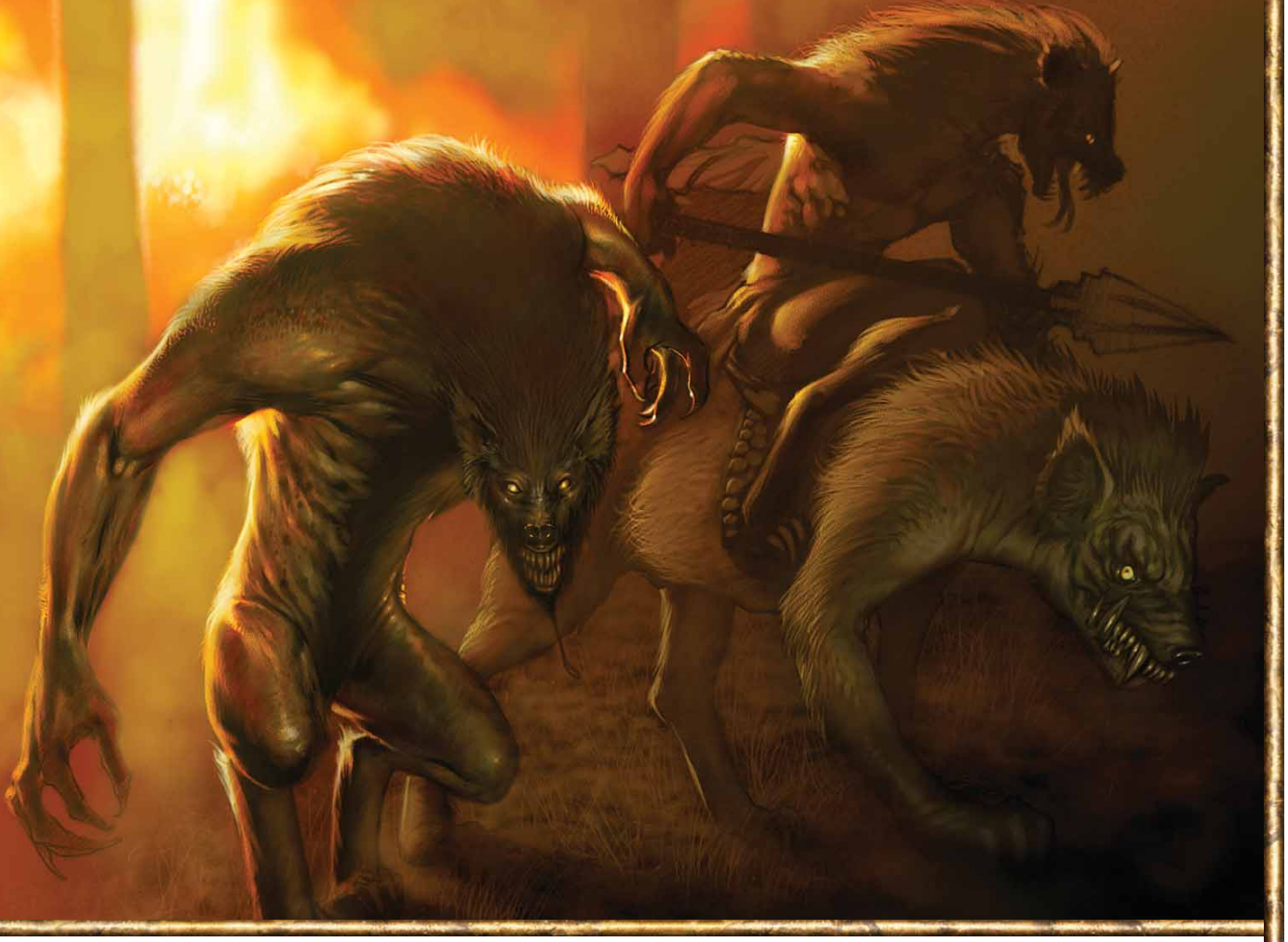
Raskra failed one time too many and Tiamat calls upon several dragons, each of a different color, to wipe out the factions. The characters might be fighting one of the dragons when it suddenly quits the battle and wings its way south. Or, an ally might ask them to investigate a wing of dragons headed south, rightly believing no good can come from their alliance. Following the dragons takes the adventurers to the city's gates, where they discover that instead of destroying the other faction, the dragons conquered them. Each dragon uses their newfound warriors to battle their rivals so that only one dragon can become the next emperor of Io'vanthor.

Old Fashioned Fun

The easiest hook is for the adventurers to hear a legend about the city and head out on their own to kill monsters and take their stuff. You can lure them with the promise of fabulous riches, power, lost lore, or whatever you like. Once there, the characters should realize they bit off more than they can chew, but if they survive, they can gain glory and riches beyond their dreams.

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb contributed design to such books as the *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide, Draconomicon I: Chromatic Dragons, Manual of the Planes, P2: Demon Queen's Enclave, Martial Power, Player's Handbook 2, Eberron Campaign Guide, Eberron Player's Guide, Adventurer's Vault 2* as well as numerous articles for *D&D Insider*. Robert lives in Tennessee.



Creature Incarnations: Gnolls

The Get of Yeenoghu

By Ari Marmell

illustrations by L.A. Williams

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Few of the humanoid races, no matter how murderous, are as feared as the bestial, demon-worshiping gnolls. More brutal than bugbears, more vicious than orcs, they are a blight on the land. In the name of their Abyssal lord Yeenoghu and driven by their own predatory instincts, they lay waste to entire communities—and of all their victims, all their prey, the dead are the luckiest by far.

The gnolls presented in the *Monster Manual* represent some of the typical members of this terrible race, the warriors you might find at the heart of most gnoll tribes. A great many variants exist, however—some the result of differing bloodlines and alternate training, while others are touched with the power of the demonic Ruler of Ruin himself. The following gnolls do not represent a specific tribe, but rather are divided into three general categories: the chaos-twisted beast-born, the mighty havoc gnolls, and the so-called "ruin-touched," which have allowed themselves to be subjected to great rituals in Yeenoghu's honor.

Beast-Born

The beast-born are horrific even by gnoll standards. Originally normal gnolls, they have been transformed by the will of Yeenoghu into fearsome monstrosities that exist only to slaughter and destroy.

Cackling Marauder

Clad in tatters and bits of broken armor, this creature represents the butchering, murderous soul of all gnolls. Its fur is matted and slick with drool and old blood, and its eyes are wide and bloodshot. Even worse is the marauder's jaw, which hangs open and crooked, as though broken and poorly set. Cracked and jagged teeth gleam from within, while a thick and foaming drool dangles obscenely from the corners of its snout. With every breath, a high-pitched cackle emerges from the wretched beast's maw, sufficient to make any creature cringe in terror.

Cackling Marauder	Level 8 Solo Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll	XP 1,750

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
Soul-Chilling Cackle (fear) aura 2 (5 while bloodied); an enemy that starts its turn in the aura shakes with fear until the end of its next turn. The creature takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and skill checks, and falls prone if it moves more than half its speed in a single action.
HP 356; **Bloodied** 178
AC 24; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 20
Immune fear
Saving Throws +5
Speed 6
Action Points 2

Claw (standard; at will)
+13 vs. AC; 3d4 + 5 damage, plus 2d6 damage against a prone target; see also *snarling bite*.

Snarling Bite (free, when the marauder makes a successful claw attack; at will)
The cackling marauder makes a bite attack against the same target: +11 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Claw Fury (standard; at will)
The marauder makes a claw attack against two targets, and can shift 2 squares after each attack.

Claw Dervish (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
The marauder shifts up to its speed and makes one claw attack against each creature adjacent to it at any time during the shift.

Horrific Cackle (minor; encounter) ✦ **Fear**
Close burst 2 (5 while bloodied); +11 vs. Will; the target is pushed a number of squares equal to its speed and knocked prone.

Bloodied Fury (free action, when first bloodied; encounter)
The cackling marauder takes any action it can perform as a standard action.

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Abyssal
Skills Endurance +12

Str 13 (+5)	**Dex** 20 (+9)	**Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 17 (+7)	**Int** 9 (+3)	**Cha** 11 (+4)

Cackling Marauder Tactics

The cackling marauder is a psychotic killer, driven by a burning madness; as such, its tactics tend to be straightforward. It attempts to move into melee, wading in with its claws and bite, allowing its aura to weaken foes it cannot immediately reach. It makes swift use of its action points, attempting to tear down its foes swiftly through overwhelming use of force. The cackling marauder has some sense of self-preservation, and uses its dervish and horrific cackle abilities to avoid foes who are dealing it substantial damage, but it almost never fully retreats from combat. The notion that it could actually lose never enters its lunatic mind.

Abyssal Slaughter-Lord

The slaughter-lord more closely resembles a lycanthrope in its "beast-man" form than it does other gnolls. Standing roughly the height of a small ogre, its head is that of a fearsome hyena. Its arms and legs are repulsively long, giving it an unnatural, shambling gait.

Abyssal Slaughter-Lord	Level 9 Elite Soldier (leader)
Large natural humanoid, gnoll	XP 800

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
Opportune Tactics aura 5; each ally in the aura gains a +1 bonus to opportunity attack rolls, and deals +2 damage on opportunity attacks.
HP 194; **Bloodied** 97
AC 27; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 23
Saving Throws +2
Speed 7
Action Points 1

Reaching Claw (standard; at will)
Reach 2; +16 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage, and the target slides 2 squares. An ally adjacent to the target after the slide can make an opportunity attack against the target.

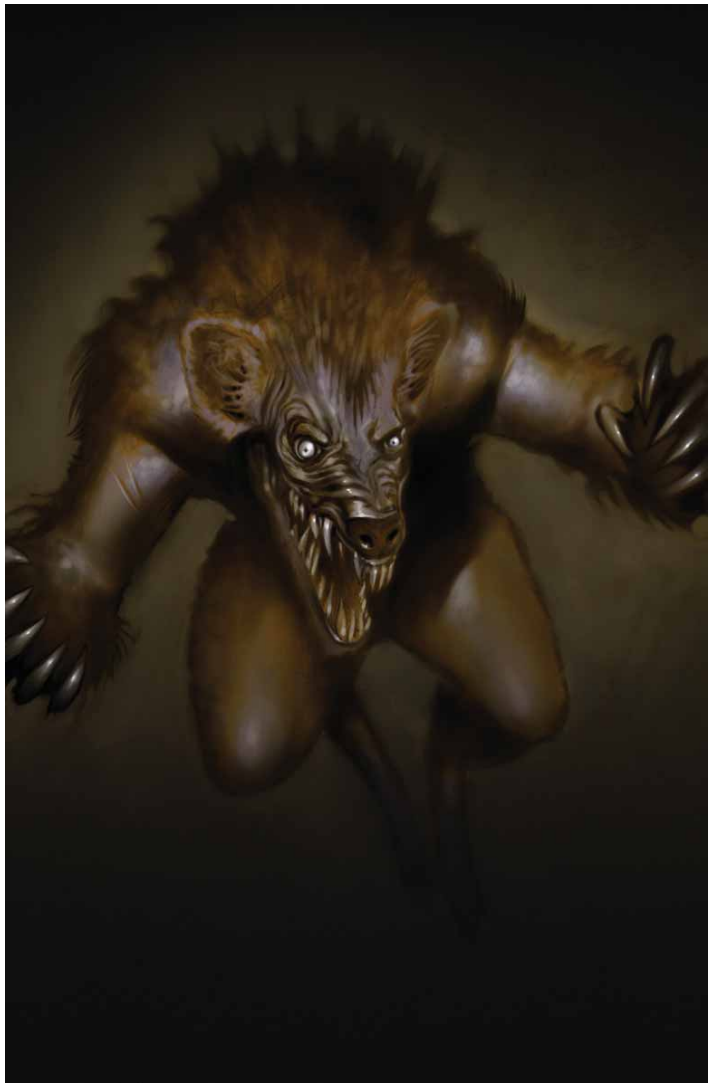
Threatening Reach
This creature can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (2 squares).

Swift Opportunist (immediate reaction, when an ally within 3 squares hits an enemy with a melee attack; at-will)
The slaughter-lord shifts 5 squares and makes a reaching claw attack against the enemy.

Pack Attack
The abyssal slaughter-lord deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the slaughter-lord's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +12

Str 21 (+9)	**Dex** 13 (+5)	**Wis** 15 (+6)
Con 17 (+7)	**Int** 16 (+7)	**Cha** 17 (+7)



Slaughter-Lord Tactics

The slaughter-lord never willingly enters battle alone, preferring instead to lead a pack of gnolls, hyenas, or other predatory beasts. It attempts to engage in melee with its enemies, preferring to keep foes at the limit of its reach, and it takes every opportunity to slide a foe toward nearby allies. It particularly enjoys moving foes around so that a particularly powerful ally can attack them twice in succession—once on their normal turn and once as an opportunity attack.

Hound of Yeenoghu

The hound of Yeenoghu has lost almost every feature that made it appear as more than a beast. Scarcely more intelligent than a wild animal, it looks much like a large hyena—almost a "dire hyena"—with only a few lingering traces of its former nature. Only those who examine it closely, who note the fingers and thumbs on its front "paws" or hear it growl out a few words of Abyssal might realize that it is far more than the simple beast it appears to be.

Hound Tactics

Like the slaughter-lord, the hound revels in close melee combat. It prefers to fight in a grand brawl, with allies and enemies all about it, so that it may best take advantage of its *blood-hunter* and *ravenous charge* abilities. If an enemy is knocked prone, it focuses its full attention on that creature.

Beast-Born Lore

The following information can be obtained with a successful Religion check.

DC 15: This beast was once a gnoll, but has since been transformed by the will of the demon lord Yeenoghu into something even more bestial.

The transformation usually overtakes adult gnolls, but in some instances children or even newborns take on the forms of these horrific beings.

Hound of Yeenoghu		**Level 9 Elite Brute**
Large natural magical beast, gnoll		XP 800
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +12; darkvision	
HP 238; **Bloodied** 119		
AC 23; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21		
Saving Throws +2		
Speed 8		
Action Points 1		
⊕ **Bite** (standard; at will)		
+12 vs. AC; 2d8 + 5 damage, and the target is knocked prone.		
↓ **Savage Rend** (minor; target must be prone; at will)		
+10 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target cannot stand until the end of its next turn.		
↓ **Blood-Hunter** (immediate reaction, when an enemy within 6 squares is bloodied; at will)		
The hound charges the bloodied enemy; see also *ravenous charge*.		
Ravenous Charge		
When the hound charges a bloodied enemy, its movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.		
Pack Attack		
The hound of Yeenoghu deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the hound's allies adjacent to it.		
Blood Scent		
The hound of Yeenoghu remembers the taste of the blood of any creature it has ever bitten, even once. It gains a +10 bonus to Perception checks to detect or track such a creature.		
Alignment Chaotic Evil	**Languages** Abyssal	
Str 21 (+9)	**Dex** 16 (+7)	**Wis** 17 (+7)
Con 19 (+8)	**Int** 4 (+1)	**Cha** 11 (+4)

Gnoll tribes are known to use the hounds of Yeenoghu as hunting hounds, particularly to track down enemies who have escaped them. Vengeance and spite are two of the emotions that the hounds retain, in full, from their prior lives as gnolls.

DC 20: Even the gnolls themselves cannot predict when one of their number will be touched in this manner. The appearance of a beast-born within the tribe is considered both a gift and a test.

In the case of a slaughter-lord or hound, the tribe knows that they are to follow these creatures into a slaughter greater than any they have ever attempted before. The appearance of a beast-born is an omen of war.

Cackling marauders, however, are so murderous that they slay even other gnolls. In these instances, Yeenoghu's "test" is for the gnolls to drive out the marauder without slaying it, so that it may terrorize others.

Encounter Groups

Abyssal slaughter-lords and hounds of Yeenoghu are often found together, and usually lead bands of gnolls into combat. (In this instance, this might not mean they "command," but rather implies that they tend to be at the forefront of the attack. Slaughter-lords don't necessarily become the ranking members of their tribes, if there are other gnolls with sufficient power or wit to challenge them.) On occasion, one or both can instead be found leading a pack of wild animals; in such instances, the animals take on some of their leader's murderous tendencies.

Cackling marauders almost always fight, live, and travel alone. On occasion, however, they join with packs of other demon-touched beasts.

Level 10 Encounter (XP 2,650)
- ✦ 1 cackling marauder (level 8 solo skirmisher)
- ✦ 3 cacklefang hyenas (level 7 brutes)

Level 11 Encounter (XP 3,250)
- ✦ 1 abyssal slaughter-lord (level 9 elite soldier)
- ✦ 1 hound of Yeenoghu (level 9 elite brute)
- ✦ 1 gnoll demonic scourge (level 8 brute)
- ✦ 1 beastcaller (level 7 controller; see below)
- ✦ 2 gnoll claw-fighters (level 6 skirmishers)
- ✦ 2 gnoll marauders (level 6 brutes)

Havoc Gnolls

Easily mistaken for their gnoll cousins, havoc gnolls are powerful warriors and vicious leaders. They are broader of shoulder than gnolls, though they tend to stand slightly shorter. These creatures

were once true gnolls, many ages ago, but they have since bred true, becoming a distinct (albeit closely related) race. In fact, they are treated as gnolls for all purposes. Although still quite chaotic, havoc gnolls tend to hold themselves to a more rigid discipline than other gnolls. They are often found in positions of leadership within tribes of gnolls, though entire tribes of havoc gnolls are not unheard of.

The following represent two of the most common paths of training among havoc gnolls, but other varieties exist.

Havoc Gnoll Prey-Taker **Level 11 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll XP 600

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +13; low-light vision
HP 91; **Bloodied** 45
AC 24; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22
Speed 6

⊕ **Spear** (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
+16 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage; see also *net master.*

⊕ **Spear** (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
Range 5/10; +18 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage; see also *net master.*

Net (standard; Medium or smaller creature only; recharges when no creature is immobilized by this power) ✦ **Weapon**
Range 4/8; +16 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is knocked prone and is immobilized and cannot stand (until escape).

Ranging Leap (move; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
The prey-taker shifts 3 squares and ignores difficult terrain for this move.

Net Master
The prey-taker deals an extra 1d6 damage on attacks made against an enemy immobilized by its net, and it takes no penalty for attacking a prone creature with a ranged attack when that creature is immobilized by its net.

Pack Attack
The prey-taker deals an extra 10 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the prey-taker's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +14, Perception +13, Stealth +16
Str 19 (+9) **Dex** 22 (+11) **Wis** 16 (+8)
Con 19 (+9) **Int** 15 (+7) **Cha** 18 (+9)
Equipment leather armor, net, 2 spears

Prey-Taker Tactics

Prey-takers normally initiate a net attack as soon as they can move within range, and then concentrate their efforts on the trapped foe. They frequently choose to leave their victims alive but unconscious, taking them back to the tribe for enslavement. Prey-takers reserve their ranging leap ability to move out of reach of foes who close to melee range.

Havoc Gnoll Tribal Champion **Level 12 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll XP 700

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision
HP 124; **Bloodied** 62
AC 28; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 24
Speed 6

⊕ **Club** (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
+19 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the tribal champion's next turn.

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at will)
+19 vs. AC; 2d4 + 6 damage.

Spinning Trip (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+17 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 6 damage and the target is knocked prone.

Reactive Trip (immediate interrupt, when an enemy marked by the champion shifts out of a square adjacent to the champion; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
The champion makes a *spinning trip* attack against that enemy.

Pack Attack
The tribal champion deals an extra 10 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the havoc gnoll's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +15
Str 22 (+12) **Dex** 19 (+10) **Wis** 17 (+9)
Con 20 (+11) **Int** 16 (+9) **Cha** 19 (+10)
Equipment hide armor, club

Tribal Champion Tactics

Havoc gnoll tribal champions prefer to attack the most dangerous enemy in a battle. They use spinning trip to keep foes on the ground and coordinate with allies that gain advantages over prone creatures. Beyond this point, assuming no greater threat has appeared to draw their attention, they make every effort to beat the enemy to death before he can regain his feet and his weapon.

Havoc Gnoll Lore

The following information can be obtained with a successful History or Nature check.

History DC 20: Ages ago, before they spread across the world as they are now, early gnoll tribes dwelled in a single region. When not raiding other races, the tribes would fight each other. Those gnolls who became the champions of their tribes in these conflicts were granted a special title; the precise title in Abyssal has been lost, but "havoc gnoll" is a corruption of its Common tongue pronunciation.

Eventually, havoc gnolls from a large number of tribes gathered together, abandoning their original families for those "more worthy." Over many years, these havoc gnolls bred true, producing the havoc gnoll race that exists today.

Most gnolls treat havoc gnolls with great respect, but most havoc gnolls consider normal gnolls to be inferior.

History DC 25: The original havoc gnoll tribe was eventually conquered by other, united gnoll tribes. The havoc gnolls were scattered among the various tribes, where most of them still exist today.

Nature DC 20: Havoc gnolls breed true; that is, two mating havoc gnolls always produce a havoc gnoll. A havoc gnoll and a gnoll usually produce a gnoll, but occasionally a havoc gnoll reappears in the bloodline—sometimes many generations later.

Encounter Groups

Although they are occasionally found in the employ of other beings, havoc gnolls most frequently assume positions of leadership in gnoll tribes. Oddly, they rarely assume positions of religious authority; though they worship Yeenoghu as devoutly as other gnolls, they tend to leave priestly duties to other gnolls. As with other gnolls, they sometimes summon or ally with demons.

Level 11 Encounter (XP 3,500)
- ✦ 1 havoc gnoll tribal champion (level 12 soldier)
- ✦ 2 havoc gnoll prey-takers (level 11 artillery)
- ✦ 2 bloodwalkers (level 9 skirmishers; see below)
- ✦ 2 worgs (level 9 brutes)

Level 13 Encounter (XP 4,200)
- ✦ 1 lich (level 14 elite controller)
- ✦ 1 vrock (level 13 skirmisher)
- ✦ 2 havoc gnoll tribal champions (level 12 solders)

Ruin-Touched

Among the most zealous of Yeenoghu's worshipers are gnolls for whom their innate strength and savagery are insufficient. These fanatics voluntarily subject themselves to potent rituals, performed by gnoll shamans and empowered by the Ruler of Ruin. The results are the "ruin-touched," gnolls who boast demonic, supernatural gifts, but have not been subject to the physical, mental, or spiritual corruption of the beast-born.

Ruin-touched do, however, show *some* physical differences from other gnolls. Beastcallers, who tend to dress in robes of heavy leather, boast slitted pupils and forked tongues; while the bloodwalkers' tears, saliva, and sweat are tinged crimson.

Beastcaller Tactics

Although beastcallers share the same bloodlust as other gnolls, they stay back from the front lines and get their thrills vicariously through the beasts they summon. They use area attacks as often as possible, supplementing them with *against the tide* to move wounded foes into disadvantageous positions. Beastcallers resort to javelin attacks only if both *murderous flock* and *erupting swarm* are unavailable for use, and they use their claws only if a foe manages to fight its way into melee range.

Beastcaller **Level 7 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll XP 300
Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 81; **Bloodied** 40
AC 21; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 21
Speed 6

Claw (standard; at will)
+13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 3 damage.

Javelin (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
Range 5/10; +13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 3 damage.

Murderous Flock (standard; recharge ⚅)
Ravens appear from nowhere and descend upon the battlefield. Burst 3 within 20; targets enemies; +11 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 5 damage, and the target is blinded and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends both). *Miss:* Half damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends) and the target is not blinded.

Erupting Swarm (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
Vermin boil from the earth and ravage everything in their path. Burst 3 within 10; targets enemies on the ground; +11 vs. Fortitude; 2d4 + 5 damage, and the target is immobilized and takes ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends both). *Miss:* Half damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends) and the target is not immobilized. *Effect:* The area becomes difficult terrain until the end of the encounter.

Against the Tide (minor 1/round; at-will)
Ranged 10; targets one creature hit by *murderous flock* or *erupting swarm* this turn; +13 vs. Fortitude; the beastcaller slides the target 3 squares or the target is knocked prone.

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Religion +11
Str 14 (+6) **Dex** 17 (+7) **Wis** 15 (+6)
Con 17 (+7) **Int** 15 (+6) **Cha** 20 (+9)
Equipment leather armor, 3 javelins

Bloodwalker Tactics

The bloodwalker prefers to focus on bloodied enemies, using bloodwalk to stay near them and blood defense to avoid damage.

Ruin-Touched Lore

The following information can be obtained with a successful Nature check.

DC 15: Some of the most fanatical warriors among the gnolls allow themselves to be subject to rituals that imbue them with a touch of Yeenoghu's demonic power. This grants them a small but potent selection of supernatural powers, which they use to augment their tribe's prowess in battle.

DC 20: Gnolls believe that the soul of a ruin-touched who dies in battle instantly joins Yeenoghu in the Abyss, where it becomes a potent demon in the Beast of Butchery's service.

Bloodwalker **Level 9 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll XP 400
Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 95; **Bloodied** 47
AC 23; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 21; see also *blood defense*
Speed 6

Jagged Sickle (standard; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage (crit 1d6 + 17).

Blood Defense (standard; target must be bloodied; at will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage, and the bloodwalker gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses until the end of its next turn.

Bloodwalk (move; recharge ⚀ ⚁ ⚅) ✦ **Teleportation**
The bloodwalker teleports up to 10 squares to a space adjacent to a bloodied creature, including itself if it is bloodied.

Blood Frenzy (free; the bloodwalker must be bloodied; at-will)
When the bloodwalker makes a successful melee attack, it shifts 2 squares.

Pack Attack
The bloodwalker deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the bloodwalker's allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +13, Religion +10, Stealth +14
Str 15 (+6) **Dex** 21 (+9) **Wis** 14 (+6)
Con 15 (+6) **Int** 13 (+5) **Cha** 18 (+8)
Equipment: hide armor, jagged sickle

Encounter Groups

Most ruin-touched devote themselves entirely to their tribes, or to cults of Yeenoghu. They accept employment from others only if other gnolls of their tribe also do so; they are never found without the company of other gnolls in some way, shape, or form.

Level 7 Encounter (XP 1,650)
- ✦ 1 gnoll demonic scourge (level 8 brute)
- ✦ 1 beastcaller (level 7 controller)
- ✦ 1 gnoll claw fighter (level 6 skirmisher)
- ✦ 2 gnoll marauders (level 6 brutes)
- ✦ 2 hyenas (level 2 skirmishers)

Level 9 Encounter (XP 2,100)
- ✦ 1 havoc gnoll prey-taker (level 11 artillery)
- ✦ 3 bloodwalkers (level 9 skirmishers)
- ✦ 1 beastcaller (level 7 controller)

Hyena

Hyenas are the frequent companions of gnolls, serving as guards, trackers, and shock troops. Some tribes of gnolls, however, have bred hyenas specifically to serve additional purposes.

Slaughterfang Hyena

This terrible beast is the size of a small horse. Horrible, twisted fangs protrude from a constantly growling snout, and a series of piercings and ceremonial scars adorn its ears, lips, and back.

Slaughterfang Hyena Tactics

Slaughterfangs fight like normal hyenas for the most part, ganging up on foes to make use of their *harrier* and *pack attack* powers.

Hyena Lore

The following information can be obtained with a successful Nature check. In addition to the information presented here, a successful check provides the information given under **DC 15** in the hyena entry (*Monster Manual*, page 166).

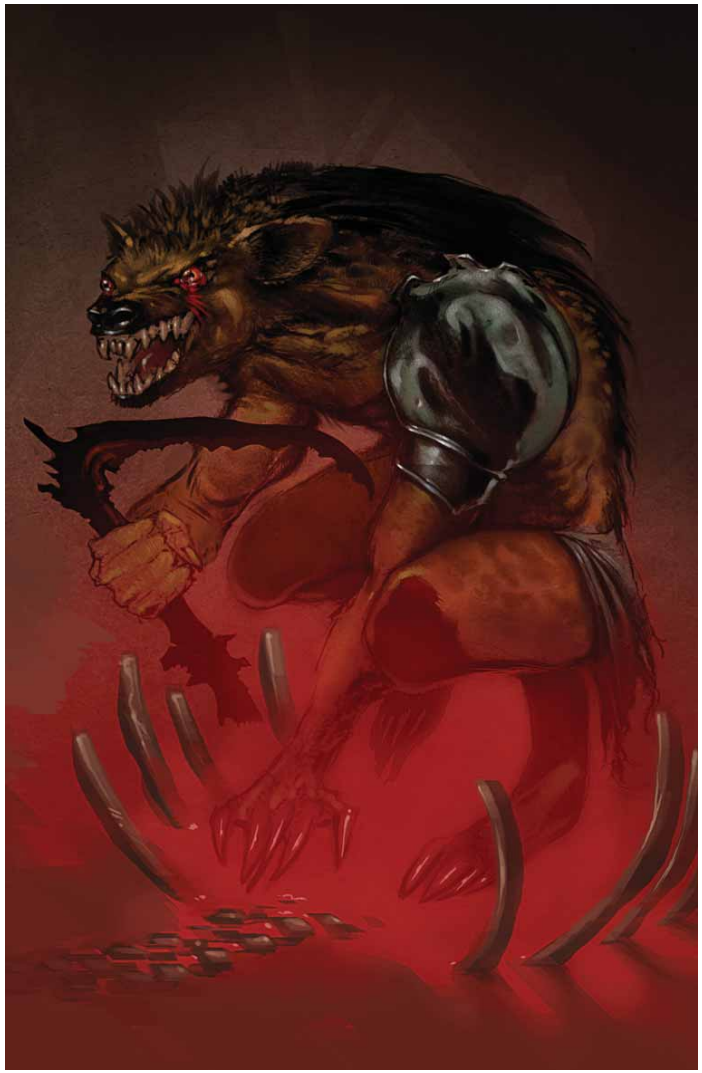
DC 15: Slaughterfang hyenas were specifically bred by gnolls to serve as mounts. They are particularly fearsome when being ridden by gnolls, as the two creatures have abilities that complement one another.

Slaughterfang Hyena		**Level 6 Skirmisher**
Large natural beast (mount)		XP 250
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +6; low-light vision	
HP 71; **Bloodied** 35		
AC 20; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18		
Speed 8		
ⓘ **Bite** (standard; at will)		
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.		
Harrier		
If a slaughterfang hyena is adjacent to an enemy, all other creatures have combat advantage against that enemy when making melee attacks.		
Mounted Pack Attack (when mounted by a friendly rider of 6th level or higher) ✦ **Mount**		
The slaughterfang hyena's rider gains a +1 bonus to melee attack rolls against an enemy that has two or more of the rider's allies adjacent to it.		
Pack Attack		
The slaughterfang hyena deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of the hyena's allies adjacent to it.		
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –	
Str 19 (+7)	**Dex** 16 (+6)	**Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 15 (+5)	**Int** 2 (-1)	**Cha** 6 (+1)

Encounter Groups

Except under the rarest of circumstances, slaughterfang hyenas are always found in the company of gnolls. On occasion, a pack of slaughterfangs goes feral, hunting their territory like normal hyenas.

Level 8 Encounter (XP 1,950)
- ✦ 1 gnoll marauder (level 6 brute)
- ✦ 2 gnoll claw fighters (level 6 skirmishers)
- ✦ 1 gnoll huntmaster (level 5 artillery)
- ✦ 4 slaughterfang hyenas (level 6 skirmishers)



About the Author

Ari Marmell has been shirking homework in favor of playing the D&D® game since he was nine years old. Thankfully, he now works in the industry, since shirking work for gaming tends to wreak havoc with the bills. He has written for quite a few of the industry's major companies, including White Wolf and, of course, Wizards of the Coast.

Dragon Slayers

by Ari Marmell

illustrations by Jason A. Engle and John Stanko

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"I am Scale-Breaker. Wyrm-Slayer. Teeth close about me, and I do not bleed. I stand in the fire, and do not burn. I will die one day at the claws of a dragon, but that day is not this, and that wyrm is not you. Turn, Beast, and face me."

The *Draconomicon: Chromatic Dragons* offers DMs a vast array of tricks and tools to make their dragons more challenging, more potent, more interesting, and more exciting. But what about those adventurers who must face said dragons? What about those characters who, like the heroes of myth, have devoted themselves to combating or studying these deadly and fierce creatures?

This article has your answers. Presented here are new paragon paths for each of the classes from the *Player's Handbook*. These paths are designed specifically for dragon-focused characters, be they dragon slayers or dragon servants (though some are more thematically suited to one or the other). Mechanically, they follow all the standard paragon path rules from the *Player's Handbook*.

So have at, and good luck. Even with these new options, you're going to need it.

Cleric: Scourge of Io

Prerequisite: Cleric

Many of the gods harbor a special hatred for dragons, or at least those dragons who do not share their alignment and worldview. They have not forgotten Io's arrogance, his refusal to work alongside them in their battle against the Primordials. As such, when a cleric devotes herself to battling these monstrous creatures, many of the gods have provided ceremonies and rites to imbue that cleric with extra powers. When you use your Scourge of Io powers, your eyes briefly take on slitted pupils and a gleam of inner power.

Scourge of Io Path Features

Dragon-Slayer's Action (11th level): You can spend an action point to reroll an attack roll against a dragon, or to end a condition currently affecting you that originated from a dragon, and that a save can end. Using this feature replaces the normal action point benefit of taking an extra action.

Draconic Anathema (11th level): You gain a new special power you can use with your Channel Divinity class feature, allowing you power over dragons similar to that which other clerics have over undead. You are still limited to one use of Channel Divinity per encounter.

Channel Divinity: Draconic Anathema Cleric Class Feature

You channel the wrath of your god through your holy symbol, striking the foul wyrm with divine power.

Encounter ✦ Divine, Implement, Radiant
Standard Action **Close** burst 5
Target: Each creature with the dragon keyword in burst
Attack: Wisdom vs. Will
Hit: 2d10 + Wisdom modifier radiant damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of your next turn.
Increase the damage to 3d10 at 21st level.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Each ally in the burst gains resist 10 to one of the following damage types: acid, cold, fire, lightning, necrotic, poison, or thunder. This resist lasts until the end of your next turn.
Increase the resistance to 15 at 21st level.

Wyrm-Bane (16th level): Dragons take a –2 penalty to saving throws against conditions that you create.

Scourge of Io Prayers

Wrath upon Dragons **Scourge of Io Attack 11**

A blast of pure force erupts from you in all directions, ravaging your foes.

Encounter ✦ Divine, Force, Implement
Standard Action **Close** burst 5
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Wisdom vs. Will
Hit: 1d12 + Wisdom modifier force damage, and the target takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn. If the target is a dragon, it is instead dazed and takes a –4 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.
Miss: Half damage. If target is a dragon, it also takes a –4 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Primal Bottle **Scourge of Io Utility 12**

Even as the dragon's flames dance around you, you raise your holy symbol and command them to fall back.

Daily ✦ Divine
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: A creature makes a close attack that includes you
Effect: You gain a +5 power bonus to all defenses against close attacks until the end of your next turn. You take no damage if the attack misses.

Fire with Fire **Scourge of Io Attack 20**

As though stealing power from the dragon itself, you breathe a blast of destructive energy and take to the air, sprouting great draconic wings.

Daily ✦ Divine, Implement; Acid, Cold, Fire, Lightning, Poison, or Thunder
Standard Action **Close** blast 5
Target: Each creature in blast
Attack: Wisdom vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d10 + Wis modifier acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison, or thunder damage.
Effect: You gain draconic wings that provide you with fly 5 (hover) until the end of the encounter.

Fighter: Scale-Breaker

Prerequisite: Fighter

The lone warrior raising sword and shield against a fearsome wyrm is one of the most iconic images of dragon-slaying. You have trained long and hard to serve as that warrior, though with the intent of facing dragons alongside allies, not alone. Your martial tactics and techniques are such that even the deadliest dragons would do well to fear you.

Scale-Breaker Path Features

Guardian Ally (11th level): Each ally adjacent to you gains a +2 shield bonus to Reflex defense against close and area attacks while you wield a shield.

Dragon-Slayer's Action (11th level): You can spend an action point to reroll an attack roll against a dragon, or to end a condition currently affecting you that originated from a dragon, and that a save can end. Using this feature replaces the normal action point benefit of taking an extra action.

Dragon Hammer (16th level): When you hit an enemy, that enemy takes a –1 penalty to Fortitude defense until the end of your next turn. If that enemy is a dragon, it also takes a –1 penalty to AC until the end of your next turn.

Scale-Breaker Exploits

Grounding Strike **Scale-Breaker Attack 11**

Your strikes ensure that your foe can't escape into the skies.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage. You can also deal +1[W], or the target cannot fly until the end of your next turn. If the target is flying when it loses the ability to fly, it falls.

Bear the Brunt **Scale-Breaker Utility 12**

You leap upon your ally, protecting him from the searing acid that washes over your back.

Encounter
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: An adjacent ally is hit by a close or area attack
Effect: You are hit by the attack instead, and your ally is unaffected by the attack.

Scale-Shattering Strike **Scale-Breaker Attack 20**

With a mighty shout, you deliver a blow that sends cracks running through the dragon's scales, as though they were little more than glass.

Daily ✦ Martial, Reliable, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage. The target takes a –4 penalty to AC and gains vulnerable 5 all (save ends both).
Aftereffect: If the target is a dragon, it takes a –4 penalty to AC and gains vulnerable 5 all until the end of its next turn.

Paladin: Knight of the Unyielding Bastion

Prerequisite: Paladin

As protectors of civilization and the innocents who dwell therein, many paladins focus their efforts against one particular type of threat, standing fast even when all others run or fall. As a Knight of the Unyielding Bastion, you have been trained in tactics, techniques, and mystical prayers that augment your abilities against dragons.

Knight of the Unyielding Bastion Path Features

Dragon's Challenge (11th level): When you use divine challenge to mark a dragon, it takes a –4 penalty to any attack that does not include you as a target, instead of –2. When a dragon takes damage from your divine challenge, it takes additional damage equal to your Wisdom modifier.

Dragon-Slayer's Action (11th level): You can spend an action point to reroll an attack roll against a dragon, or to end a condition currently affecting you that originated from a dragon, and that a save can end. Using this feature replaces the normal action point benefit of taking an extra action.

Partake of My Strength (16th level): You can use your lay on hands power on an ally as an immediate interrupt when you and an ally are both targeted by a close or area attack.

Knight of the Unyielding Bastion Prayers

Divine Deflection **Attack 11**
Knight of the Unyielding Bastion

Your sword disrupts the dragon's breath, sending it everywhere but at your friends.

Encounter ✦ Divine, Radiant
Immediate Interrupt **Melee** weapon
Trigger: An enemy within reach makes a close attack that includes at least one ally
Target: The triggering enemy
Attack: Strength vs. Reflex
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and each ally in the target's close attack gains a power bonus to all defenses against the attack equal to 2 + your Wisdom modifier.

Dragon Flame Sacrifice **Utility 12**
Knight of the Unyielding Bastion

You shield your ally from the searing flames of the dragon's breath.

Encounter ✦ Divine, Teleportation
Immediate Interrupt **Close** burst 5
Trigger: An ally within the burst is targeted by a close burst attack that does not include you
Target: That ally
Effect: You and the target exchange spaces. You gain a +2 power bonus to defenses against the attack.

Beast-Punishing Strike **Attack 20**
Knight of the Unyielding Bastion

Your weapon not only crushes bone and parts flesh, but delivers a tiny seed of energy that takes root within your enemy's soul.

Daily ✦ Divine, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 4[W] + Strength modifier damage. The target cannot recharge powers (save ends).

Ranger: Wyrm-Hunter

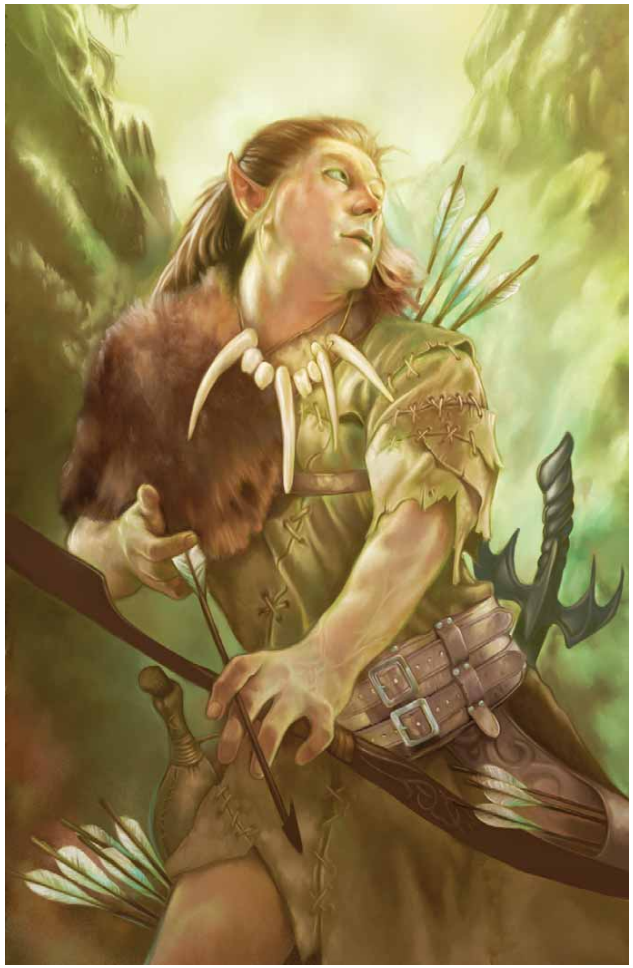
Prerequisite: Ranger

Dragons are among the most dangerous game, yet some are courageous enough to hunt them. You might do so to protect others from their depredations, you might do so for payment, or you might simply enjoy the thrill of hunting something so powerful. Whatever your motivations, you have learned all you can about stalking and killing these horrific beasts.

Wyrm-Hunter Path Features

Dragon Stalker (11th level): When you deal your Hunter's Quarry damage to a dragon, you deal an additional +2 damage for each die rolled.

In addition, you gain a +2 bonus on monster knowledge checks regarding dragons and on Perception checks to track dragons.



Dragon-Slayer's Action (11th level): You can spend an action point to reroll an attack roll against a dragon, or to end a condition currently affecting you that originated from a dragon, and that a save can end. Using this feature replaces the normal action point benefit of taking an extra action.

Draconic Resolution (16th level): When a dragon reduces an ally that you can see to 0 hit points or fewer, you can spend a healing surge.

Wyrm-Hunter Exploits

Grounding Attack — **Wyrm-Hunter Attack 11**

Taking careful aim, you deliver a swift blow to the dragon's wing, sending the great beast crashing down.

Encounter ✦ Martial
Standard Action **Melee or Range** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. Fortitude (melee) or Dexterity vs. AC (ranged)
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage (melee) or 2[W] + Dexterity modifier (ranged). You can also deal +1[W], or the target cannot fly until the end of your next turn. If the target is flying when it loses the ability to fly, it falls.

Into the Fire — **Wyrm-Hunter Utility 12**

Even as the flames crackle around you, burning your flesh, you take advantage of the distraction they provide to move in on your foe.

Encounter
Immediate Reaction **Personal**
Trigger: An enemy targets you with a close or area attack.
Effect: You shift a number of squares equal to your speed.

Deadly Aim — **Wyrm-Hunter Attack 20**

The dragon shrieks in pain, unaware that this was merely a ranging shot for a far deadlier attack to come.

Daily ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee or Range** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC (melee) or Dexterity vs. AC (ranged)
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage (melee) or 3[W] + Dexterity modifier (ranged). In addition, your next attack that hits the target, if it occurs before the end of your next turn, deals +3[W] damage.

Rogue: Hoard Raider

Prerequisite: Rogue

The world contains few sources of wealth greater than a dragon's hoard. While most consider it suicide to target a hoard for theft, some rogues consider these targets the ultimate challenge. You count yourself among these thrillseekers, "liberating" gold and magic items from the lairs of great dragons, and possibly leaving a dead dragon in your wake as well.

Hoard Raider Path Features

Gap in the Armor (11th level): When you score a critical hit against a creature you have combat advantage against, you deal an additional 1d6 damage. If this creature is a dragon, you instead deal an additional 2d6 damage.

Dragon-Slayer's Action (11th level): You can spend an action point to reroll an attack roll against a dragon, or to end a condition currently affecting you that originated from a dragon, and that a save can end. Using this feature replaces the normal action point benefit of taking an extra action.

Flank the Beast: While you are flanking an enemy, you gain a +1 bonus to AC against that creature's attacks. If that enemy is a dragon, you instead gain a +2 bonus to AC and Reflex against that creature's attacks.

Hoard Raider Exploits

Dodging Strike — **Hoard Raider Attack 11**

You strike quickly and keep moving to avoid the dragon's breath.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee or Range** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and you gain a +4 power bonus to your Reflex defense until the end of your next turn. If the target is a dragon, you deal an additional +1[W] damage.

Blinding Glare — **Hoard Raider Utility 12**

You duck down into the dragon's howling breath, disappearing from sight.

Encounter ✦ Martial
Immediate Reaction **Personal**
Trigger: You are targeted by a close or area attack
Prerequisite: You must be trained in Stealth.
Effect: You become invisible to the attacking enemy until the end of your next turn.

Killing Thrust — **Hoard Raider Attack 20**

Your attack reveals your enemy's weak point to your friends.

Daily ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 4[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and the target grants you combat advantage until you end your turn in a square not adjacent to it. If the target is a dragon, it also grants all your allies combat advantage for the same duration.
Miss: Half damage and the target grants you combat advantage until the end of your next turn. If the target is a dragon, it grants you and all your allies combat advantage until the end of your next turn.

Warlock: Dragonbane Pactmaker

Prerequisite: Warlock

Dragons are ubiquitous. They dwell in every known world, in every known environment. They exist even amongst the fey, among the fiends, and among the stars. You have entered into a second compact with an entity that despises all that is draconic, and it has granted you the ability to more effectively combat dragons.

Dragonbane Pactmaker Path Features

Dragonbane Boon (11th level): When an enemy under your Warlock's Curse is reduced to 0 hit points or fewer, you gain a +1 bonus to your Reflex defense until the end of your next turn. If that creature is a dragon, you instead gain a +3 bonus to your Reflex defense.

Dragon-Slayer's Action (11th level): You can spend an action point to reroll an attack roll against a dragon, or to end a condition currently affecting you that originated from a dragon, and that a save can end. Using this feature replaces the normal action point benefit of taking an extra action.

Dragonbane Curse (16th level): An enemy under your Warlock's Curse that hits or misses you takes 1 point of damage. If the enemy is a dragon, it instead takes damage equal to your Charisma modifier.

Dragonbane Pactmaker Spells

Breath-Disrupting Blast **Attack 11**
Dragonbane Pactmaker

Your blast of eldritch energy unsettles the dragon's breath.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Implement
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Will
Hit: 2d10 + Charisma modifier damage, and the target takes a -1 penalty to attack rolls on close and area attacks until the end of your next turn. If the target is a dragon, it instead takes a -4 penalty to attack rolls on close and area attacks.

Ride the Burning Wind **Utility 12**
Dragonbane Pactmaker

You ride your enemy's raging flame to safety.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Teleportation
Immediate Reaction **Personal**
Trigger: You are attacked by a close attack
Effect: You teleport to a space of your choice outside the close attack's area. If the attack hit you, you take half damage. If the attack missed you, you take no damage.

Fearsome Gaze **Attack 20**
Dragonbane Pactmaker

Your direct a glare of pure malice at your foe, burning into its brain and soul.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement, Psychic
Standard Action **Range** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Fortitude
Hit: 4d12 + Charisma modifier psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). If the target is a dragon, it is instead stunned (save ends).

Warlord: Dragon Marshal

Prerequisite: Warlord

Entire schools of study have been devoted to the topic of making war upon dragons and other fearsome beasts of great size, and you have studied them all. Whether leading an adventuring party or an entire army, you are most at home with the swords and spells of allies behind you, and one really big target before you.

Dragon Marshal Path Features

Vengeance for All (11th level): When you take damage from a close or area attack, each ally you can see who was also a target of that attack gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls against the creature that attacked you until the end of your next turn. If the attacker is a dragon, it is a +2 bonus.

Dragon-Slayer's Action (11th level): You can spend an action point to reroll an attack roll against a dragon, or to end a condition currently affecting you that originated from a dragon, and that a save can end. Using this feature replaces the normal action point benefit of taking an extra action.

Unflagging Spirit (16th level): When an ally you can see spends an action point to make an attack and misses, the ally gains temporary hit points equal to your level and can make a saving throw. If the ally's attack missed a dragon, the ally regains hit points equal to your level instead of gaining temporary hit points.

Dragon Marshal Exploits

Beast-Surrounding Maneuver **Dragon Marshal Attack 11**

You and an ally skim along the enemy's flank, stabbing as you go.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage, and an ally adjacent to the target can make a melee basic attack against the target as a free action.
Effect: Shift 1 square and make the secondary attack. If the target is a dragon, you can instead shift 3 squares.
Secondary Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage, and an ally adjacent to the target can shift 1 square and make a melee basic attack against the target as a free action. If the target is a dragon, the ally can instead shift 3 squares.

Hit Him Where it Hurts! **Dragon Marshal Utility 12**

With a shout, you direct your ally's blow where it will inflict the most harm.

Encounter ✦ Martial
Free Action **Close** burst 5
Trigger: An ally in the burst attacks an enemy
Hit: The attack scores a critical on a natural roll of 19 or 20. If the target is a dragon, it scores a critical on a natural roll of 18, 19, or 20.

Breath-Taking Slam **Dragon Marshal Attack 20**

You and your allies are ready to strike at the first sign of the dragon's breath.

Daily ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage. Until you end your turn in a square not adjacent to the target, when the target makes a close attack, you and each ally adjacent to it can make a melee basic attack against the target as an immediate interrupt. If the target is a dragon, it takes a -1 penalty to the triggering attack for each such melee basic attack that hits.

Wizard: Draconic Antithesis

Prerequisite: Wizard

Many wizards study the ways of dragons. What better source of ancient lore and potent magic, after all, than creatures capable of living a thousand years or more? You, too, have chosen to study these great beasts, but because you believe them a menace or a great evil. For whatever reason, you hone your spells to best counter and destroy the legendary creatures.

Draconic Antithesis Path Features

Countering Thesis (11th level): When you take damage of a certain type, you gain resist 5 against that damage type until the end of your next turn.

Dragon-Slayer's Action (11th level): You can spend an action point to reroll an attack roll against a dragon, or to end a condition currently affecting you that originated from a dragon, and that a save can end. Using this feature replaces the normal action point benefit of taking an extra action.

Sky-Slayer (16th level): You gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls against flying creatures.

Draconic Antithesis Spells

Energy Dispersal **Draconic Antithesis Attack 11**

Your arcane gesture drains away energy within the target, weakening its ability to use its powers.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Implement
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Intelligence vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d8 + Intelligence modifier damage, and the target is slowed until the end of your next turn. Choose a damage type keyword. The target cannot use a power that has that keyword until the end of your next turn.

Earth-Binder **Draconic Antithesis Utility 12**

Flying creatures acquire an indisputable gravity in your presence.

Daily ✦ Arcane
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, you gain an aura 5. A creature that starts its turn in your aura loses its fly speed until it starts its turn outside your aura.

Energy Disruption **Draconic Antithesis Attack 20**

Your swift spell dissipates the dragon's breath without harm—to you or your allies.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement
Immediate Reaction **Range** 10
Trigger: An enemy within range makes a close or area attack with a damage type keyword
Target: The triggering creature
Attack: Intelligence vs. Fortitude
Hit: 4d10 + Intelligence modifier damage, and the target's attack is canceled. If the attack is not at-will, it is considered expended. The target can choose a different use for the action.
Miss: Half damage and the target takes a -3 penalty to the triggering attack's rolls.

About the Author

Ari Marmell has been shirking homework in favor of playing the D&D® game since he was nine years old. Thankfully, he now works in the industry, since shirking work for gaming tends to wreak havoc with the bills. He has written for quite a few of the industry's major companies, including White Wolf and, of course, Wizards of the Coast.

Class Acts: Warlord

Devilish tricks from the ancient warmongers of Bael Turath!

BY STEPHEN RADNEY-MACFARLAND

illustration by Sam Wood

Resourceful. Bravura. Commanding. Inspiring. All these words describe the warlord. Unlike the cleric who channels leadership by using divine inspiration, a warlord digs deep into her inner being to pull victory from defeat and inspire her companions toward victory after victory. But some warlords find inspiration and power beyond their ken to supplement their native tactical genius. One of the most dramatic examples of this tradition comes from fallen Bael Turath as detailed in sections of *The Hellpath Tome*.

Although the writings of the legendary tiefling general Malachi are some of the more celebrated passages of *The Hellpath Tome*, his contributions came relatively late to the history of Bael Turath and are refinements of the tactics and maneuvers of a then mature—some would say stagnant—empire. Other older sections of that martial history are rooted in the ancient traditions of the empire, back when the first pacts were formed between the people that would become the tieflings and the powers of the Nine Hells. These earlier forms and exploits are more closely connected to the infernal. As a result, they are more manipulative and most are brutal. Many emulate the tactics of the devils themselves—even to the extent of favoring polearms and reach weapons—while others blur the line between martial exploit and infernal pact. These disciplines, or at least those that have been uncovered, have become very popular with warlords who do not fear the dangers of infernal pacts.

Some of the fragments found in *The Hellpath Tome* just scratch the surface of a deep and ancient martial discipline taught to the early soldiers and captains of Bael Turath by the Dukes of Hell. Only time will tell if more will be uncovered. Maybe brave (or foolhardy) adventurers currently plundering the ruins of Vor Kragal will unearth future martial and infernal wisdom.

Level 1 Encounter Exploit

Diabolic Stratagem **Warlord Attack 1**

A feint and attack marks a foe and seemingly leaves you defenseless, but it's just a cunning move to allow you to make other attacks.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. Reflex
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage, and the target is marked until the end of your next turn.
Effect: You grant the target of this attack combat advantage until the start of your next turn. The first attack the target makes against you before the start of your next turn provokes opportunity attacks from you and your allies.

Level 6 Utility Exploit

Polearm Vault **Warlord Utility 6**

You fly over the heads of friend or foe with a vault leveraged by your polearm.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Move Action **Personal**
Requirement: You must be wielding a polearm.
Effect: Move 4 squares, ignoring difficult and hindering terrain. You can use this power to move through an enemy's space, but doing so provokes opportunity attacks when leaving a square adjacent to the enemy as normal.

Level 9 Daily Exploit

Caging Glaive **Warlord Attack 9**

You use the advantage of your reach to position your foe and then cage him with a myriad of minor swings.

Daily ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a reach weapon.
Target: One creature
Effect: Before making the attack, slide your target to any space adjacent to you.
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage, and your target is slowed and grants combat advantage to all creatures until it starts its turn in a square outside your melee reach.
Miss: Half damage and target is slowed and grants combat advantage to all creatures until the end of your next turn.

Level 13 Encounter Exploit

Malebranche's Pull **Warlord Attack 13**

The painful stab puts your foe off balance. The follow-up pull has it groveling in pain.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a reach weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and slide the target 3 squares to a space adjacent to you. After the slide, the target is knocked prone.

Level 16 Utility Exploit

Kyton's Battledance **Warlord Utility 16**

Inspired by the weaving tactics of chain devils, this stance has you weaving through the enemy forces with diabolical grace.

Daily ✦ Martial, Stance
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Once a turn you can spend a minor action to shift 1 square.

Level 19 Daily Exploit

Glasya's Stride **Warlord Attack 19**

As manipulative as the mistress of Malbolge, this exploit wreaks havoc among large groups of enemies.

Daily ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Effect: Shift your speed.
Targets: A number of creatures within your melee reach at any point during your move up to your Intelligence modifier (minimum 1).
Attack: Strength vs. AC, one attack per target
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage, and slide the target 1 square.
Miss: Strength modifier damage and slide the target 1 square.

Level 23 Encounter Exploit

Pit Fiend's Fury **Warlord Attack 23**

True power is the ability to prostrate the unwilling.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Close** burst 2
Requirement: You must be wielding a polearm.
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage and knock the target prone.

Level 29 Daily Exploit

Asmodeus's Gambit **Warlord Attack 29**

Sometimes a minor sacrifice by a commander can yield swift and terrible action from the troops.

Daily ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Special: Before you make the attack, you grant combat advantage to all your enemies until the start of your next turn.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 4[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you mark the target and opportunity attacks against the target gain a power bonus to damage rolls equal to your Intelligence modifier (save ends).
Effect: Until the end of your next turn, enemies making a melee attack against you provoke opportunity attacks from your allies.

Feats

The following set of feats represents a special pact that warlords who multiclass into warlock and the infernal pact can take.

Infernal Captain's Pact [Multiclass Warlock]

Prerequisites: Warlord, Pact Initiate (infernal pact)

Benefit: Once per encounter, as a minor action, you can place an Infernal Captain's Curse on the enemy nearest to you that you can see. The curse wreathes the target in the semblance of hellfire. This effect radiates light like a torch (radius 5 squares) but creates no heat. When you hit a creature under your Infernal Captain's Curse with an attack, the target grants an ally of your choice combat advantage on the ally's next attack.

Infernal Captain's Fury [Multiclass Warlock]

Prerequisites: 11th level, warlord, Infernal Captain's Pact, Pact Initiate (infernal pact)

Benefit: When you hit a creature under your Infernal Captain's Curse with an attack, you can grant an ally 2d6 extra fire damage if the ally hits with his or her next attack against the creature instead of making the target grant an ally combat advantage on the ally's next attack.

Increase the extra damage to 3d6 at 21st level.

Hell's Implement [Multiclass Warlock]

Prerequisites: Warlord, Pact Initiate (infernal pact)

Benefit: You can use a polearm as a warlock implement, adding its enhancement bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls for warlock powers that use implements. You do not gain your weapon proficiency bonus to the attack roll when using a polearm as an implement. You cannot use powers or properties from the item to empower or enhance your warlock attack powers.

Magic Item

This magic polearm is a favorite of those warlords who take the infernal captain's path.

Devil's Tongue Polearm **Level 7+**

This wicked polearm's red lacquered blade takes the shape of stylized flames atop a pole of burned wood reinforced with black iron.

Lvl 7	+2	2,600 gp	Lvl 12	+3	13,000 gp
Lvl 17	+4	65,000 gp	Lvl 22	+5	325,000 gp
Lvl 27	+6	1,625,000 gp			

Weapon: Polearm
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d8 damage per plus
Property: A creature within your melee reach and under the effect of your Infernal Captain's Curses at the start your turn takes fire damage equal to your Intelligence modifier.
Power (Daily): Free Action. Use this power when you hit a creature under your Infernal Captain's Curse. The target grants combat advantage to all creatures (save ends).

About the Author

Born on a stormy Christmas day, in our nation's capital, during the Nixon administration, the stars were definitely wrong when Stephen Radney-MacFarland came screaming into the world. Spending most of his impressionable years as a vagabond and ne're-do-well, Stephen eventually settled in the Northwest to waste his life on roleplaying games.

Once that RPGA guy, Stephen is now a developer in RPG R&D. He also teaches a class on roleplaying design for the Art Institute of Seattle, molding the minds of young and upcoming designers. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

The Challenge of Skill Challenges

BY MIKE MEARLS

Skill challenges are one of many concepts that 4th Edition introduced to the Dungeons & Dragons game. As with any new tool in the game, a DM needs time, practice, and practical experience to master them. In many ways, the R&D department at Wizards of the Coast has undergone the same growing pains and learning experiences with skill challenges, much as DMs all over the world have. A new mechanic like the skill challenges system takes experienced DMs back to their first days behind the screen, learning mechanics on the fly and figuring out what works through hard-earned experience at the gaming table. If you've tried to design and run a skill challenge and had a bumpy ride, you're not alone.

This column aims to share what we at Wizards have learned about skill challenges with the typical D&D gamer. Judging by the Living Forgotten Realms adventures run at Gen Con, and by multiple threads on the message boards, people have tons of questions about the rules and, more importantly, how to implement them.

Skill Challenge Ground Rules

To start with, let's look at some basic rules for designing skill challenges, which will, in turn, start the process of building a skill challenge. We'll outline some basic ground rules for skill challenge design, and then apply them to a specific example. On to the rules:

1. Skill challenges are like fights. They work best when you and the players want one to happen.

Let's say you designed a combat encounter for your next adventure. The characters need to cross a bridge, and there's a big, hungry troll in their way. Time for a fight!

That is, unless the players decide to sneak around the troll or bribe it with a cask of fine ale. A good DM knows that sometimes it's best to take the party's crazy plan and run with it, especially if the players back up their ideas with a few natural 20s on Stealth or Diplomacy checks. A good DM thinks on his feet and rewards clever, interesting ideas.

The same logic applies to skill challenges. Is there a chance that a really good idea could completely trump your skill challenge? Don't fret! That's a good thing. D&D is a game about creativity and the imagination. If there's only one specific, scripted path to success, you've lost what makes D&D fun. When you build a skill challenge, be prepared for it to fly off the rails or for the party to fail utterly. That way, the game moves on regardless of what happens with the challenge.

2. Skill challenges are like fights. If standing in one place and doing the same thing over and over again is the best plan, you need to go back to the drawing board.

A skill challenge is a lot more than a fancy, extended skill check. The best ones embrace improvisation and a broad range of skills and abilities. Let's say the characters are trapped in a dungeon when the exit collapses. Is digging their way out a skill challenge?

At first blush, the answer seems like yes. The party has to work as a group to clear the rubble. Athletics and Dungeoneering seem like the perfect skills to measure the PCs' success. Yet, in play such a skill challenge is boring. The characters who excel at those skills make their checks while everyone else hangs back, seeking any excuse possible to avoid shoveling dirt and clearing away rubble. Regardless of how you slice it, the characters need to make checks to shove aside that rubble. If your potential skill challenge has a similar bottleneck—in which only one skill does the heavy lifting for the challenge—you need to rethink the encounter.

3. Skills challenges are still like fights. A variety of options makes them compelling.

The DMG tells you to mix up artillery, soldiers, and the other monster roles in your combat encounters. A mix of beasties makes for a fun fight because it varies the challenge and lets you throw a broad mix of abilities at the PCs. The paladin holds back the hobgoblin soldiers, the ranger scans the shadows for the goblin backstabber, while the wizard unleashes her spells on the hobgoblin shaman. Every character has the chance to shine, and the party has to act as a team to answer each threat the monsters pose. Everyone has the same basic goal (blast the monsters), but each character achieves that goal in very different ways.

This piece of advice is similar to the second rule, but there's an important distinction here. It isn't enough to simply pick a wide variety of skills. You

need to create a broad range of sub-challenges and obstacles within a challenge. A good skill challenge consists of a number of different, incremental tasks that combine for a fun encounter. It isn't enough to pull different skills into the challenge. The players should feel like their characters have a lot of options and important decisions. Otherwise, a skill challenge turns into a boring series of die rolls.

4. Skill challenges are finally no longer like fights. They can (and should!) cover hours or even days of progress.

Think about how long it should take the party to overcome the skill challenge. If your answer can be measured in minutes, you might be looking at a simple skill check. When you design a skill challenge to cover a day or a week of effort, you open it up to a wide variety of individual hurdles within the challenge as a whole, and a broader range of skills.

When in doubt, start a skill challenge a scene or two before you think it should begin and extend it a scene after you think it should end. Let the characters use skills to both set up their impending efforts and to seal the deal after they've encountered the primary scene of the challenge. If you let the characters engage in the challenge over a variety of different settings, you make it easier to pull a diverse list of skills into the challenge, and you give the players more chances to make important choices to shape the challenge's outcome.

BUILDING A SKILL CHALLENGE

All this advice seems nice, but it's not worth much without practical examples. Let's work through a skill challenge for my Greyhawk campaign, using the four principles I've outlined above.

The city of Suderham is the base of operations for the Slavers, a vicious gang of criminals who raid seaside villages and towns. At some point in my campaign, the characters might have to travel to Suderham and blend in with its inhabitants. As a town dedicated to unrepentant evil, Suderham is a dangerous place for adventurers. If the characters want to survive, they need to stay off the town guard's radar. Here's how I'll implement this challenge using the four rules I introduced above.

1. Skill challenges are like fights. They work best when you and the players want one to happen.

I assume that the players want the characters to keep a low profile, but as any experienced DM knows, it's impossible to predict what the characters might do. In this case, I have an easy out if the party goes for loud, obnoxious, and violent over quiet, subtle, and smooth. The adventure can easily turn into a running battle or a chase if the PCs start busting heads. In addition to the skill challenge, I should have some street maps ready for encounters, a few guard patrols designed, and perhaps even the skeleton of a second skill challenge for a chase. I should also take some notes on how the city reacts to a raiding adventuring party. If the characters opt for swords and spells over stealth, I'm ready to handle it.

As you can see, the first step boils down to some simple advice that DMs have followed for over 30 years. Be ready to improvise, and never trick yourself into thinking that the PCs will follow the path you expect. This advice might seem obvious, but it's easy to think that a skill challenge is so flexible that there's no way the party can dodge it.

The real payoff in this step is that it forces you to think about how the challenge can fail without derailing the adventure. Failing a challenge can lead to a more difficult, complex adventure, but it doesn't grind things to a halt.

2. Skill challenges are like fights. If standing in one place and doing the same thing over and over again is the best plan, you need to go back to the drawing board.

It would be easy and lazy to focus solely on Stealth and Bluff as the key skills to navigate Suderham. However, that likely puts the entire burden for the skill challenge in the hands of one or two characters. If I really can't stretch the challenge to fit other skills, then I need to look at junking the challenge all together, or reducing its complexity to a low rating. Since I want this challenge to play a key role in the campaign, I'm not ready to junk it. Instead, I need to look at the skill list and diversify the approaches open to the characters.

To start, boil the challenge down to a simple, single sentence. Here's mine:

"The characters need to avoid arrest at the hands of Suderham's town guard."

As I mentioned above, the first, obvious choices are Bluff and Stealth. However, I want more skills to give all the characters a chance to take part. Here's how I do this:

First, **aim for a number of key skills equal to the number of characters in the party + 2**. If there are more PCs than useful skills, you're automatically sticking a few PCs without any way to make a meaningful contribution outside of using aid another.

Second, **aim for a diverse set of skills**. Athletics is a great skill for challenges because four of the eight classes in the PHB have it on their lists. Nature and Perception seem like obvious choices for many challenges, but only two classes have access to them. Check out the table on page 178 of the PHB for a summary of the skills and the classes that offer them. Aim for half of your skills to be taken from the following selection of skills that three or more classes feature on their class lists:

Arcana
Athletics
Diplomacy
Dungeoneering
Endurance
Heal
History
Insight
Intimidate
Religion
Streetwise

Here's a summary of the "rare" skills, those offered by two classes:

Acrobatics
Bluff
Nature
Perception
Stealth
Thievery

The list is short, but it includes a number of skills that seem like obvious keys to a lot of skill challenges. It hits both the skills that I thought were shoe-ins for my challenge, making it obvious that I need to pull more skills into the mix.

In addition, "rarity" isn't the only measure. Here are the skills broken down by role, with a skill list only if it shows up on the lists of every *Player's Handbook* class in a given role.

Defender: Endurance*, Heal, Intimidate
Striker: None!
Leader: Diplomacy*, Heal, History
Controller: Arcana*, History*, Religion*

Since the wizard is the only controller in the PHB, that class's list consists of wizard class skills that use Intelligence. A wizard is good with those skills whether he is trained or not. In addition, an asterisk (*) next to a skill indicates that it uses an attribute useful to all the classes in that role.

As you can see, the list of shared skills by role is woefully short. The classes present in the party play a huge role in the skills that the PCs can actually bring to bear. Unlike a combat encounter, where balance in the roles ensures that the party can handle almost any mix of critters, skill challenges have no easy shorthand for figuring out what the party can deal with. It's critically important that you use the lists above, and your knowledge of the characters, as a reality check for your challenges.

At this point, I have a starting point for the challenge. I know the challenge's purpose, I'm ready to roll with any unexpected turns the adventure might take, and I know I need to diversify my list of critical skills. It might not seem like much, but finding trouble spots in a skill challenge before play is a big first step.

Next month, I'll move on to the next two rules of skill challenges and show you how they solve all the problems that the first two rules pointed out to me.

About the Author

Mike Mearls is the Lead Developer for the Dungeons & Dragons roleplaying game. His recent credits include *H1: Keep on the Shadowfell* and *Player's Handbook II* (v.3.5).

Barbarian & Bard

BY LOGAN BONNER AND MIKE MEARLS

Logan Bonner: Now that the Insiders out there have had a chance to see previews of the barbarian and bard, we're going to share some of the major decisions that shaped the final forms of these classes. I did most of the initial work on the bard, and I've gotten some interesting barbarian tidbits from Rob Heinsoo. Let's start there.

The Barbarian

The first version of the barbarian was created way back in an early version of Orcus, after the decision to use "green buttons, red buttons, and black buttons" – what we now know as at-will, encounter, and daily powers. Even then, the rages were dailies instead of fitting into a 3E-style class feature. The coolness of those dailies made the Orcus designers realize that the daily powers for the other classes needed to be bigger and more exciting, and that eventually shaped the primal power source as a whole, especially its theme of transformation.

Mike Mearls: One of the first 4th Edition characters I played was an elf barbarian. I even painted a miniature for him. It was clear early on that the barbarian had a lot more going for him than our other classes [at that time]. The barbarian's design, and the emphasis on the rages, made us step back and recalibrate our expectations for the different types of powers. We toned down encounter powers and made daily powers more powerful. The barbarian provided a good litmus test: The words "I rage" herald a big moment for a barbarian player. We wanted to preserve that and create a similar level for all classes.

LB: For a while, every rage had an at-will attack attached. Unfortunately, that had some balance problems and made the barbarian want to rage as early and often as possible, which isn't ideal.

MM: As with a lot of things in 4th Edition, the barbarian's rages started out far more complicated than they ended up. The rages used to give an at-will attack flavored to the rage's theme. There were also a number of hoops a barbarian had to jump through in order to rage. We dropped this approach because it was cumbersome and made the barbarian boring to play once he entered a rage.

LB: The big decision for the barbarian was whether it would be a defender or striker. The designers and developers realized that even if a barbarian claims to be a defender, they'll still want striker damage, and that the "Hulk smash!" part of the barbarian is really what defines it.

MM: Striker felt like a natural fit once we looked at how barbarians played out in 3E. A barbarian was really good at dishing out damage, but they get into trouble if they tried to take on too many attackers. That sounded like an almost perfect description of a striker. We also wanted to do more to ensure that the roles defined a class's basic output rather than its look or feel. A striker with a big weapon and a focus on straight-up melee sounds like a defender, but there's no reason why it can't be a striker.

LB: One of the builds in *Player's Hanbook 2*, the thaneborn barbarian, is maybe not what you'd expect from the first appearance of this class. It plays off the intimidating, frightening presence of the barbarian that was always there, but seeing a Charisma-based build for this guy will raise a few eyebrows.

MM: When we make a class in 4th Edition , we have to take a big picture view of it and ensure that we can do multiple, interesting builds for it. If a class seems like it has only one build, we might be dealing with a concept that is too narrow or one-dimensional. The way I see it, the builds let someone who really loves a class find a few different ways to play that class. The builds also broaden the races and play styles that a class can embrace. I really like the idea of a barbarian being a vicious brute or an inspiring, though hotheaded, war leader.

The Bard

LB: In 3E, the bard was a versatile class with a lot of options, but with great versatility came great incompetence. Being good at many things and best at nothing isn't really that great in a game that encourages specialization in order to be really effective. With the new version of the game, the bard needed to be able to hold its own as a class while keeping the versatile feel. To that end, we gave the bard the ability to multiclass in any number of classes, but we made the class good enough without multiclassing that it's not mandatory to do so.

MM: The bard is a roleplayer's class. I played one in 2E, and it's no mystery why so many characters in Forgotten Realms novels are bards. They're fun to play, purely from a story and roleplay perspective. With the bard in 4th Edition, we wanted to preserve the feel of a cunning trickster while stripping away the golf caddy approach of 3E.

LB: Even though its jack-of-all-trades nature in previous editions made the bard's role a bit muddy, it was pretty clear where we wanted to go in 4th Edition. A class so focused on helping allies is pretty clearly a leader. The bard's less focused on healing and more tactical.

MM: I think of the bard as the clever guy at the back of the party who uses his magic to trip up and confuse the monsters. He's like Face from the A-Team. He always has a good idea up his sleeve.

LB: Flavor is essential to the bard, so we really played up the themes of song, poetry, and art in the power names and descriptions. The bard has kind of a bad rap, coming off as silly to a lot of players. While the bard can't totally escape that, we tried to avoid having the bard stand around in the middle of a heated battle strumming a lute while everybody else is fighting for their lives.

MM: It's also worth noting that the bard passed my personal litmus test — I could convincingly play a gnome jester with the class, just by tweaking a bit of the flavor. The instrument thing is now purely optional. You can use one if you want, and magical instruments are a useful tool for a bard outside of a fight, but we didn't want to shackle bards to them.

LB: Getting an interesting hook for builds is an essential part of class design and something we've stressed more with newer classes. For the bard, I think we have a great one. The bardic virtues are different ideals bards attempt to embody, such as cunning or valor. They're very flavorful, and a bard who focuses on one still cares about the others, so it's pretty easy to rationalize picking powers from outside your core bardic virtue.

The feel works well, too, since it feels a bit chivalrous or romantic — a great fit with a class that loves tales and song. Also, we have plenty of places we can go with these, a huge advantage when it comes to build features.

MM: Alas, the comedy virtue and its magical, rubber chicken implement didn't survive contact with any sane person in the department, but I can still dream, can't I?

LB: The two virtues we chose for *Players Handbook 2* go with two types of bards — a trickster who stays in the back rank and uses an implement, and a brave weapon-wielder who strides into battle.

MM: The bard was a real joy to work on, primarily because there are so many directions the class can pursue. You can play, say, a gnome jester! Or more seriously, the class supports the dragonborn warrior-bard who sings in time with the rise and fall of his axe. While I joke about the jester, the mechanics do support the bard who avoids melee and hinders his enemies (and helps his friends) from a short distance. The key was that both of those guys would look and act like bards. The way they fight is a detail, so that's how we treated it in placing it within a build.

LB: One of the interesting stories is *misdirected mark*, which Bill previewed in *Ampersand*. Originally, this and several other powers were encounter powers, until development upgunned them to at-wills.

MM: In development, we seek out key mechanics that look like they can define a class and then find ways to make them more accessible. It's the same reason why wizards can gain *scorching burst* as an at-will spell. The bard's at-will attacks had to make him feel like a clever trickster or the intent for the class would be lost. A well-designed class expresses its role, flavor, and story with only its class features and at-will attacks.

About the Authors

Logan Bonner traded the Great Plains of Kansas for Seattle when he landed a job at Wizards of the Coast. As a mechanical designer, he has worked on *Dungeon Tiles*, *D&D Miniatures*, *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*, and *Adventurer's Vault*.

Mike Mearls is the Lead Developer for the Dungeons & Dragons roleplaying game. His recent credits include *H1: Keep on the Shadowfell* and *Player's Handbook II (v.3.5)*.

Dungeon Diaries

BY SHELLY MAZZANOBLE

Let's be honest Adolescence can be a crappy time for any kid, but I feel like it could have been easier if I had played D&D.

I just left my weekly D&D game, and the only backstabbing going on involved a bastard sword and a strategically placed minion. With no rest and only a handful of healing surges between the six of us, we took on an endless stream orcs, a body-pierced shadar-kai warlock, and a weeble-like Captain Bad Ass who had the maddening ability to keep popping up every time we knocked him down. Multiple times in the 2 hours, everyone made choices that put their PCs in danger all so they could save someone else—including the NPC who got us into this mess!

D&D isn't about sabotage or sacrificing your friends to make yourself look good. This sure isn't middle school! Who do I contact to make D&D as much a requirement as PE and Health?

I would have had real friendships—not the on-again-off-again tumultuous celebrity-like relationships 10-year-old girls are prone to. Maybe I would have been focused on things like the best defense against a bugbear or figuring out how to defuse a trap rather than cigarettes, dressing like Madonna, and Brenden Wendle's hair. And after facing villains like hellcats, frostworms, and chimeras, maybe I wouldn't have been so terrified of that mysterious camp in the Poconos my parents used to threaten my brother and I with.

I've met D&D playing kids at conventions or around the office, where they show up with their books and pockets full of minis, and regale us with their tales of Dungeon Mastering. (They often take turns because *everyone* wants to DM!) I marvel at their ability to rattle off stats straight from the *Monster Manual* and argue with R&D over the virtues of a beholder versus a zombie. I listen enraptured to the epic backstories they give their characters and how they wax poetically about them like one of my friends does when she meets the latest man of her dreams. *He's big and he's strong and he can swing a masterwork greatsword with only two fingers.* They were crawling in dungeons before they crawled in living rooms.

And cool to be smart! Not true in my day. In an effort to be accepted by the dumb, shoplifting, ripped-jeans-not-because-it-was-cool-but-because-their-jeans-were-really-ripped-crowd, I failed a vocabulary test on purpose because it wasn't cool to have an A in English. The next day Mom's green Cordoba was in the parking lot, and she and I were in the principal's office where it was determined that I did in fact know what *conceited* meant, and clearly

I was trying to act out. Did I need attention? Were things okay at home? Was I eating?

I also knew what *mortified* meant and not because I was quizzed on it. My mom used the word at least twelve times on our way home from school. She made a deal. "Every week you don't fail a test, stay away from those girls, and quit pretending you're riddled with this pre-teen angst crap, I'll take you to K-Mart and buy you two new books."

Wow! Two new books every week? Can Judy Blume and Francine Pascal even write that fast?

So why the stroll down memory lane? Because I stumbled across my childhood diary the other day. My 3 by 4, green, vinyl-covered book with the words, "One Year Diary" etched in gold across the cover. Here I wrote down all my innermost thoughts. I was barely a decade old and apparently had multiple-personality disorder, because most of my entries are scribbled out with the words "No I didn't!" or "Gross! Not true!" scrawled across the pages.

I love Brenden Wendle!
I hate Brenden Wendle!
I hope my parents don't make me go to the Poconos!

The inside front cover has the words "Property Of," which I filled out in my nine-year-old script, *SHELLY!* If that weren't clear enough I wrote *"Not you Mike!!!! Or Mike's friends!!!!* And then as if foreshadowing my future life as a part-time sorceress, I added, "Read it and be cursed with bad luck!"

I do not look back on this time with any sense of nostalgia. If I look back at all, it's more with a sense that I'm about to break out in hives and need to throw my face in a paper bag to regulate my breathing. Flipping through some of my diary entries, I realize much of what I anguished over could have been avoided if I had had the benefit of a D&D group twenty years ago.

Yeah, I've heard the tales of woe from the kids who did grow up playing D&D – getting beat up in gym class and called names like *freak* and *nerd* and *Orc Face*. But guess what? I was called names too. Like "Brenden Wendle Lover" (TLA!) and "Smelly Shelly" (OMG!) and "Turtle Head" (WTH?). At least if I was part of a D&D group, I'd have the benefit of returning to a group of friends I know would have had my back. And my turtle head.

So, in the spirit of the season, I'd like to give thanks to D&D for imparting these important life lessons. For some of you it may not be too late. Go on without me! Save yourselves! Back to middle school we go!

Don't split up the party! Not ever! And especially not to impress a boy.

January 13, 1982

Dear Diary,

I am in so much trouble. I walked home with Liz like we do every day. Only this time I dared her to take the shortcut! *(Adult Shelly's Note: The shortcut was in fact a very effective timesaver, but the risks were immense. If you got busted running through the old lady's yard, she would hold you hostage while she called your parents and make them come get you. She was like 80 years old, yet no one ever tried to outrun her.)* **I told her she was too chicken to try it and even lied and said I did it all the time (I only did it once and that was because Brenden Wendle was watching.) She did it and got caught! Now her parents are on the phone with my mom and I'm going to get in soooooooo much trouble! Oh diary, how could I have been so stupid?**

Dear Stupid,

Yeah that was kind of silly as you broke a cardinal rule of D&D. **Don't split up the party!** Not ever! And especially not to impress a boy. Look, these are your fellow adventurers. If one takes a shortcut, you all go. Sure the risks are high, but the rewards are plentiful. You'd have a great story to tell the class the next day and witnesses to prove you really did it. That said, you're not the most stupid person involved. Liz is. See what else you can make her do.

March 24, 1982

Dear Diary,

I hate Liz! She is dumb at speling *(Adult Shelly's Note: And yes, this is my actual spelling.)* **and I tried to help her study for a test. I should have been studying for my own test but helped her instead. She got a 90 and I only got 83! She bragged all around school about how smart she is and never told anyone I helped her study! I hate her. I hope she fails the next test and I get 100.**

P.S. Brenden Wendle told her congratulations! Ooooh I hate her guts!

Dear Bad Speler,

Umm, hi. I know you. And I know spelling never was and most likely never will be your strong suit. Sorry. But yeah, it sucks when you help make something good happen and someone else takes all the credit. How do you think editors feel?

Look, not everyone can be the hero every time. Sometimes you have to settle for an assist. But a party's success is a collective effort. Everyone takes a turn and everyone contributes to the overall goal. Even if it wasn't your dagger that finally took out the beast you probably knocked it down a few hit points yourself. Good friends split the treasure equally.

Dear No Friends,

Why? Because she gets paid to. And let me tell you, she gets paid big bucks because you and your brother have driven out every other teenage girl in the greater Binghamton area. You need to learn some respect for the rules, young lady, even if they are stupid. I think it's silly that a wizard can have three daily spells in her spellbook but still only use one a day. And what's with only being allowed to use shield until the end of her next turn? If it's raining out would you only use your umbrella for a few blocks before tossing it aside and spending the next three miles getting drenched? I mean, if you got it, use it. Or better yet, just add 4 points to her Armor Class and Reflex defense

—you're going to wish you had a Dungeon Master telling you what to do.

June 17, 1982

Dear Diary,

My babysitter is the jerkiest person in the whole world! I hate her! I wasn't supposed to have Liz or Ellen over and I was going to tell my mom that I did. Stupid Kathy comes in and tells everyone that I'm not allowed to be friends with those two and makes them go home! Now I have NO friends! Why does she get to tell me what to do?

permanently so she can keep her hands free. You know what I wish Tabitha was doing right now? Sleeping. That's right. Sleeping. But she's not. She stuck between games, about to head off to the next level of a dungeon where she knows trouble is a brewin'! Take a chill pill, Tabitha! But noooooo, New DM said there wasn't time to rest. If we dared plop our butts down we would surely be eaten by trolls.

Your parents are the Dungeon Masters, and when they can't be there to control your fate, they get to call in a sub. And trust me Little Shelly, when you're an older, pseudo-independent PC running around with overdraft charges, living above meth labs, and you're devastated because your favorite jeans got a real hole in them—not one you strategically sliced one inch above the knee with a steak knife—you're going to wish you had a Dungeon Master telling you what to do.

September 8, ~~2008~~ 1982

Dear Diary,

I think boys like Liz! Why don't boys like me?

Dear Unlikable,

You win some, you lose some? It's just the roll of the die? Liz is dumb? Sorry. Not even D&D can prepare you for this one.

October 31, 1982

Dear Diary,

It is Halloween and I want to go trick or treating but my mom said I can't because of the poisoned candy. Well, she didn't say I couldn't go. She said she'd pay me $2 not to go. I don't want to take my chances. My life is more important than candy.

Dear Sugar Free,

Wow. I don't even know what to say. I had no idea you were this big of a nerd. The only thing you apparently like more than candy is not having to walk for it. Good adventurers are sometimes on their feet, moving through difficult terrain for days. With no rest. Beaten, bruised, sleeping on dirt if they're lucky enough to get some shut eye. Do you have any idea how much a masterwork dagger weighs? Not everyone has a *bag of holding*. Or a sucker—I mean friend—like Adam willing to carry it all. And FYI, your life is worth more than $2. If Mom wants to sweeten the deal, ask for more money. Or a temporary reprieve from Sunday school. Use your skills wisely. Train up in Diplomacy. Brush up on Bluff. Would it kill you to try some Athletics once in a while? You have no idea how often you'll need these skills.

November 29, 1982

Dear Diary,

It's starting again. Mara, Cara and Tara are picking on me. They are so mean! They scare everyone! They steal Shari Tucci's clothes! They make kids cry! But not me! They even wrote on the bathroom wall about me. My dad taught me how to make a fist. I hope I don't need to use it! Why do I have such stupid friends?

Dear Stupid,

What's wrong with this sentence: Why do I have such stupid friends? Nope, it's fine to call those girls stupid. They are. But *friends*? Are you serious? Why are you trying so hard to be pals with these girls? They're awful! And trust me, they don't ever grow up. A good adventuring party cannot consist of one wizard with a decent vocabulary and three dumb rogues. Do you honestly think Cara would take ten points of psychic damage for you? Do you think Tara would act as a shield for you? Do you think Mara would make sure you're safely out of the dungeon before she tried to defuse a trap? You have to find balance. Seek people who aren't afraid of being themselves. There have to be other girls in your class you could befriend. Form an alliance with them and take Mara, Cara, and Tara down!

By all means keep those dukes up. It feels damn good to know you can use 'em when you need 'em!

December 17, 1982

Dear Diary,

I wrote a play for extra credit. It's about dogs going to school. Mrs. Dancy loved it but Mara, Cara and Tara said it was stupid because dogs don't talk and they don't go to people schools! They wouldn't let anyone be in my play even though a couple of kids wanted to. My mom said they pick on me because they are jealous and know I have a gift. I hope she's right. I hate them!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I want to be a dog!

Dear Gifted,

First of all, quit telling people you want to be a dog!

Second, Mom was always good at saying the right thing and you were always good at believing it. This is why you grew up to be incredibly delusional. But your "gift?" Who are you? Drew Barrymore in *Firestarter*? Have you heard of a game called Dungeons & Dragons? It's a roleplaying game. You would like roleplaying! You can be a dog! Most importantly you can play D&D with other "gifted" friends who understand the joys of reading, writing, using analytical skills, and math! You can use your imagination and work as a team! The only people who get picked on are the bad guys, and they deserve it! D&D will help you make real friends! Most importantly, it's cool to have imaginary friends! Well...cool might be stretching it.

Adolescence is as baffling as any ziggurat you and your future party ends up in.

But one thing's for sure: Adolescence is as baffling as any ziggurat you and your future party ends up in. There's an attack of opportunity around every corner! Don't go out there unprepared! D&D is the best defense against pre-teen angst. If that doesn't work, I have some brochures from a lovely camp nestled deep in the Poconos.

P.S. Brenden Wendle was arrested last year for attempting to carjack an officer in an unmarked police car.

P.P.S. Lots of nice boys play D&D.

XOXO,
Your Future Self

About the Author

After reading the rest of the entries in her old diary, **Shelly Mazzanoble** begins to wonder if perhaps a summer in the Poconos might have done her well.

Dungeon Mastering in Public: Prepare Yourself!

BY CHRIS TULACH

LAST MONTH, we discussed your first DM session for Living Forgotten Realms. The take-your-character-anywhere approach to Living Forgotten Realms often results in play happening outside of a kitchen table -- at a game shop, a library, or at a big convention. This month, we'll talk about preparing to DM a session in a public venue.

You might be asked to volunteer by a friend involved with a public event, or you might take the initiative to volunteer your time to help out a local or national event (such as Worldwide D&D Game Day or Gen Con Indy). Volunteering your time to help run a game for a public event is a great way to meet new gamers, show off your skills as a DM, and learn valuable tips and tricks from people outside of your normal play group. Few gaming experiences are more satisfying for a DM than finishing a session with a group of strangers and getting congratulated on running a great game. The rewards for both new DMs looking to hone their skills and veterans looking to show off their ability to entertain a group are immediate and valuable. So, aside from being out in "the world," what are the considerations you'll need to make to make the leap from home to public?

The most important element in a public play event (RPGA or otherwise) is time. Often, you have to finish an adventure within a certain block of time; at conventions, this is often known as a "slot" of gaming. Most RPGA adventures are written to be playable within about 4 hours from start to finish, including setup and conclusion. You'll need to consider this when preparing your adventure and running it at the table.

During the time when you prepare your adventure before the event, take time to consider the encounters you're going to run and how long you think each one will take. The more enemies present in the encounter or the more complex the skill challenge, the more time you'll want to allot. Most combats in 4th Edition can be finished in about 45 minutes or so; if you have an overly complex combat, it might take an hour. Combats that are straightforward or less challenging than typical for the level of the PCs take about a half an hour. Skill challenges typically take about half the time of a combat; more challenging skill challenges run 20 to 30 minutes, and less challenging ones take only about 10 to 20 minutes. If you have roleplaying scenes with no challenge, time can be highly variable depending on the type of group at your table, so you'll most likely have to make adjustments while the game is in progress. A good guide is to assume about 15 minutes or so for a roleplaying scene.

While you're preparing, you might want to make some adjustments to the adventure's encounters to anticipate variance in character level or player skill. Most RPGA adventures allow the DM to adjust the encounters to the group's experience and level. You might want to make minor modifications to the encounters beforehand (such as leveling up or down an enemy, figuring out where to place an additional enemy, and so on) so that you're prepared to smoothly integrate the adjustments without stopping the game for long periods of time. Adjusting monsters is straightforward in 4th Edition, but if you haven't had a lot of practice with it, it's always a good idea to make some notes.

Lastly, while preparing your adventure, make sure you thoroughly read it through twice, if possible. The first time, just give the adventure a read and make notes on anything that jumps out at you; if you have an idea how to adjust an encounter to make it more fun or if you see a potential place where you'll need to troubleshoot, quickly write a note and keep reading. The second time you read through, stop frequently to think about how you'd like each encounter to develop. While some sections in each encounter's text can aid you, it might be worthwhile to make additional notes on tactics or roleplaying flourishes you can add to the adventure.

After you've prepared your adventure, it's time pack for the event. If you're going to a convention or gameday, make sure you bring all the materials you need to the show. Make sure you print out a copy of your adventure or bring a laptop. Don't forget "the little things" like pens/pencils, paper, the gaming schedule (usually only necessary for bigger shows), and your dice! DMing away from home doesn't mean you need to bring all your books; it's best to only bring your *Player's Handbook* to keep your load light (RPGA adventures have all the statistics in the text). Players that are using character options from other books need to have the material present, so the burden's not on you to have the appropriate rulebook references. If you're bringing Dungeon Tiles to use for your encounters, it's always a good idea to bring a gridded playmat as a backup, just in case some tiles go missing or your group veers off the beaten path. If you're going to be at the public spot for a while, you might want to pack some snacks and drinks (if the venue allows you to bring such things).

Now that you've prepped your adventure and loaded up for your event, you're ready for showtime. Next month, we'll talk about what to expect while you're at the event. Until then, happy monster slaying!

Welcome to the Inside

by Bill Slavicsek

Hey. Glad you could make it. Welcome to the inside.

This is my first "&" column since we turned on the subscription service, and I want to kick it off in a big way. I want to show you the kind of things you can expect on a regular basis as a member of our elite club—as a D&D Insider. I want to let you in on the secrets that only Insiders have access to. I want to show you the new elements of the game that you're going to get to see and play with before anyone else. I want you to help us craft the direction of D&D. That's what being an Insider is all about.

In this column, I'm going to show you another class from *Player's Handbook 2*. This time out, you get to see the bard. I'm showing off one bard build, from level 1 to level 10. Just to give you a taste of how another classic character class translates into 4th Edition. But we'll get to the bard a bit later. I've got a few other things to share with you first.

On My Desk Today ...

Every once in a while, Insiders should get a glimpse of what's occupying my time as R&D Director for Dungeons & Dragons and Book Publishing. Remember that what I'm about to share with you is secret and highly confidential. Make sure you only talk about this stuff with other Insiders.

Currently, on my desktop, you can see the working files for adventure *P3: Assault on Nightwyrm Fortress* and the super adventure *Revenge of the Giants*. I'm doing the final editing on P3, getting it ready to go to Typesetting. It's an exciting trek through a mysterious castle in the Shadowfell that takes player characters to the verge of Epic play. And the Big Villain is pretty scary. I can't wait to run my game groups through this one. For *Giants*, I'm working with Mike Mearls and David Noonan to design the ultimate giants-themed adventure. We're still in the earliest stages of design on this one, so I can't tell you much more than this—in addition to all the giants you would expect, we're introducing a new giant type called ... hmm, I think I'll save this one for another column.

I've also got a link on my computer to the latest version of the *D&D Character Builder*. This application just gets better and better every day, and next week Insiders will get to start playing with it. Watch for more details as the week progresses, and let your friends who haven't become Insiders yet know that the Character Builder is coming—and initially the only people who get to try it are D&D Insiders.

On my physical desk, I just got copies of *Draconomicon: Chromatic Dragons* and *P2: Demon Queen's Enclave*. These are what we call "first bounds," which let us see how the printed product is going to look. And these two look great. I also have an "ARC" (advanced reader copy) of Ari Marmell's Planeswalker's novel, *Agents of Artifice*. I just started reading it and I'm enjoying it immensely. Good job, Ari!

I've got a full set of *Demonweb*, the newest set of D&D Miniatures. I've used miniatures in my roleplaying games since my earliest days in the hobby, and there are a bunch of figures in this set that I can't wait to slip into an encounter or three. In no particular order, except for how I pulled them out of the bag: Black Dragon Lurker, Phaseweb Spider, Mezzodemon, Shadow Flayer, Cyclops Hewer, Web Golem, Ettin Spirit-Talker, Kruthik Hive Lord, and Brutal Ogre Warhulk. And that was just the first handful! I find that using the miniatures adds to the D&D experience, and there're a lot of memorable figures in this set. My players are going to hate some of these figures—and I mean that in a good way!

I've also got a summary of the barbarian playtest feedback from the community. We received a lot of amazing feedback and good suggestions that are going to make the barbarian class even better in its final form. I want to take a moment to thank everyone who tried it out and sent in feedback. One of my designers or developers is going to post about this process and what we got out of it in the near future. I just want to make sure you know we appreciate your help and your passion. Look for more of this kind of partnership as we move forward, because that's going to be a big part of the Insider experience.

'Tis the Season

It's never too early to start thinking about what you can give—or what you want to get—for this holiday season. I've always been a proponent of giving books and games as gifts. They provide hours and hours of entertainment, as well as inspire creativity, expand imaginations, and make people smile. What could be better than that? Here are a few things to consider as you think about your holiday purchases.

For younger players and new players ...

- *Dungeons & Dragons 4th Edition for Dummies*
- *Dungeons & Dragons Roleplaying Game Starter Set*
- *A Practical Guide to Dragons*
- *A Practical Guide to Monsters*
- *A Practical Guide to Wizardry*
- *The Stowaway: A Tale Set in the Forgotten Realms*

For the Dungeon Masters on your list ...
- ✦ *Dungeon Master 4th Edition for Dummies*
- ✦ *Demonweb D&D Miniatures Booster Packs*
- ✦ *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide*
- ✦ *Dungeon Tiles: Streets of Shadow*
- ✦ *Draconomicon: Chromatic Dragons*
- ✦ *Manual of the Planes*

For players and all D&D fans ...
- ✦ *Deluxe Core Rulebooks*
- ✦ *Adventurer's Vault*
- ✦ *Martial Power Sourcebook*
- ✦ *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*
- ✦ *The Pirate King*, a Forgotten Realms novel
- ✦ A gift subscription to D&D Insider

Everybody needs a little fun and imagination. So give the gift of D&D this holiday season. It'll make you feel good. And maybe someone new will be inspired to take up the hobby. I hope you get everything on your list, too, because we all deserve to get as good as we give.

And speaking of gifts, here's the bard. Enjoy!

BARD

"The clash of blades, a note.
A battle fought, a verse.
The hero's war, a song."

Bards are artists first and foremost, and they practice magic just as they practice song, drama, or poetry. They have a clear sense of how people perceive reality, so they master charm magic and some illusions. Sagas of great heroes are part of a bard's repertoire, and most bards follow the example of many fables and become skilled in a variety of fields. A bard's artistic ability, knowledge of lore, and arcane might are widely respected, particularly among the world's rulers.

CLASS TRAITS

Role: Leader. Your spells inspire and invigorate your allies. Your spells also include significant control elements, making controller a natural secondary role.

Power Source: Arcane. You channel magical power through words and music, studying long and hard to master the power contained in the lore and sagas of old.

Key Abilities: Charisma, Intelligence, Constitution

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth, leather, hide, chainmail; light shield

Weapon Proficiencies: Simple melee, longsword, scimitar, short sword, simple ranged, military ranged

Implements: Wands

Bonus to Defense: +1 Reflex, +1 Will

Hit Points at 1st Level: 12 + Constitution score

Hit Points per Level Gained: 5

Healing Surges per Day: 7 + Constitution modifier

Trained Skills: Arcana. From the class skills list below, choose four more trained skills at 1st level.

Class Skills: Acrobatics (Dex), Arcana (Int), Athletics (Str), Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Dungeoneering (Wis), Heal (Wis), History (Int), Insight (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Nature (Wis), Perception (Wis), Religion (Int), Streetwise (Cha)

Class Features: Bardic Training, Bardic Virtue, *majestic word*, Multiclass Versatility, Skill Versatility, Song of Rest, *words of friendship*

Art and magic share a sublime beauty, and, as a bard, you seek the place where the two meet. You might be a naturally talented wanderer who casts impressive spells almost instinctively, a student of a bardic college who learned ordered systems of magic and epic poetry, a warrior skald who mixes skill at arms with thundering music, a dashing performer known for putting on a good show even for your enemies, or a perfectionist who seeks the consummate formula that blends art and magic into a higher force.

A steady rhythm beats in the back of your mind as you brandish your sword. Your eyes and ears pick up the motion of the villains that surround you, and one glance tells you everything you need to know to defeat them. You whistle three staccato notes, letting your allies know the symphony of battle is about to begin.

Bard Class Features

Bards have the following class features.

Bardic Training

You gain the Ritual Caster feat as a bonus feat, allowing you to use magical rituals. You own a ritual book, and it contains two rituals of your choice that you have mastered: one 1st-level ritual that has bard as a prerequisite (see Chapter 4) and another 1st-level ritual.

In addition, you can perform one bard ritual per day of your level or lower without expending components, although you must pay any other costs and use any focus required by the ritual. At 11th level, you can perform two bard rituals per day of your level or lower without expending components; at 21st level, you can perform three.

Bardic Virtue

Bards praise many virtues in their stories, telling tales of people whose particular qualities set them above common folk. The valor of dauntless heroes and the cunning of great minds are among these virtues, and a bard can choose to emphasize either quality.

Choose one of the following options. The choice you make gives you the benefit described below and also provides bonuses to certain bard powers, as detailed in those powers.

Virtue of Cunning: Once per round, when an enemy attack misses an ally within a number of squares of you equal to 5 + your Intelligence modifier, you can slide that ally 1 square as a free action.

Virtue of Valor: When any ally within 10 squares of you reduces an enemy to 0 hit points or bloodies an enemy, you can grant temporary hit points to that ally as a free action. The number of temporary hit points equals 2 + your Constitution modifier at 1st level, 5 + your Constitution modifier at 11th level, and 8 + your Constitution modifier at 21st level.

Majestic Word

The arcane power of a bard's voice can heal allies. You gain the majestic word power.

Multiclass Versatility

You can choose multiclass feats from several classes.

Skill Versatility

You gain a +1 bonus to untrained skill checks.

Song of Rest

When you play an instrument or sing during a short rest, you and each ally who can hear you are affected by your Song of Rest. When an affected character spends healing surges at the end of the rest, that character regains additional hit points equal to your Charisma modifier with each healing surge.
A character can be affected by only one Song of Rest at a time.

Words of Friendship

Bards use magic to honey their words and turn the simplest argument into a compelling oration. You gain the words of friendship power.

Implements

Bards use wands to direct and control their spells. When you wield a magic wand, you can add its enhancement bonus to the attack rolls and the damage rolls of bard powers and bard paragon path powers that have the implement keyword. Without a wand, you can still use these powers.

Songblades and some magic musical instruments (see Chapter 3) can be used as implements for bard powers and bard paragon path powers. Bards treasure these magic musical instruments not only for the power they offer, but for the wondrous melodies they produce in the hands of a skilled musician.

Creating a Bard

Your choice of ability scores, class features, and powers suggests one of two builds based on the storied virtues of cunning and valor. All bards use Charisma for their attacks. Intelligence increases the effect of tricky attacks, and Constitution is best for powers that inspire allies.

Bard Overview

Characteristics: Your powers are a mix of ranged, melee, and close attacks, giving you plenty of options whether you choose to lead from the front or the rear. Your attacks can provide bonuses and extra movement to you and your allies, or they can charm and deceive your enemies.

Religion: Many bards revere Corellon, patron of both artists and wielders of arcane magic. Cunning bards also honor Avandra and Sehanine, who are credited with inspiring trickery in the heroes of old. Valorous bards are more likely to revere Bahamut, Kord, or Moradin. Evil bards often worship Lolth, Tiamat, or Zehir.

Races: Half-elves are sometimes said to be the best bards, partly because their ability score bonuses favor the valorous bard and partly because their Dilettante racial trait complements the bard's Multiclass Versatility. Gnomes and tieflings both make excellent cunning bards.

Cunning Bard

The heroes of the past whom you hold as exemplars overcame adversity and escaped danger using their wits, by tricking their foes and concocting cunning stratagems. You seek to emulate those heroes, combining your winning personality with a keen intellect. You use Charisma for your attack powers, so make it your highest score, followed by Intelligence to improve the effects of your tricky powers. Constitution is a good third score. Look for powers that let you put your cunning to work. Most cunning bards focus on ranged attack powers, using a wand from a safe distance to orchestrate the flow of battle.

Suggested Class Feature: Virtue of Cunning
Suggested Feat: Advantage of Cunning
Suggested Skills: Arcana, Bluff, Intimidate, Perception, Streetwise
Suggested At-Will Powers: misdirected mark, vicious mockery
Suggested Encounter Power: blunder
Suggested Daily Power: stirring shout

Bard Powers

Your powers are called spells, and you create them by gracefully mixing art, magic, and weapon skill.

Class Features

Each bard has the powers majestic word and words of friendship.

Majestic Word — Bard Feature

You utter words laden with preternatural inspiration, restoring your ally's stamina and making wounds seem insignificant.

Encounter (Special) ✦ Arcane, Healing
Minor Action — **Personal**
Effect: You gain a +5 power bonus to the next Diplomacy check you make befoe the end of your next turn.

Level 1 At-Will Spells

Misdirected Mark — Bard Attack 1

You conceal your arcane attack, tricking your foe into thinking the attack came from one of your allies.

At-Will ✦ Arcane, Implement
Standard Action — **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8 + Charisma modifier damage, and the target is marked by an ally within 5 squares of you until the end of your next turn.

Level 21: 2d8 + Charisma modifier damage.

Vicious Mockery — Bard Attack 1

You unleash a string of insults at your foe, weaving them with bardic magic to send the creature into a blind rage.

At-Will ✦ Arcane, Charm, Implement, Psychic
Standard Action — **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Will
Hit: 1d6 + Charisma modifier psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Level 21: 2d6 + Charisma modifier damage.

Level 1 Encounter Spells

Blunder — Bard Attack 1

You fog your foe's mind, causing it to stumble past your allies.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Charm, Implement
Standard Action — **Ranged** 5
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Will
Hit: 1d6 + Charisma modifier damage, and you slide the target 2 squares. During the slide, you or one of your allies can make a melee basic attack against the target as a free action, with a +2 power bonus to the attack roll.

Virtue of Cunning: The power bonus to the attack roll equals 1 + your Intelligence modifier.

Fast Friends — Bard Attack 1

You sing a tune of false friendship, leaving your foe in a reverie.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Charm, Implement
Standard Action — **Ranged** 5
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Will
Hit: Choose yourself or an ally. The target cannot attack that character until the end of your next turn or until you or one of your allies attacks the target.

Level 1 Daily Spells

Echoes of the Guardian — Bard Attack 1

You recite a verse from the saga of a great warrior, confounding your enemy so that one of your companions can more easily protect the others.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Weapon
Standard Action — **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Charisma modifier damage, and until the end of your next turn, the target is marked by an ally within 5 squares of you.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, once during each of your turns, choose an ally within 5 squares of you when you hit an enemy. Until the end of your next turn, that enemy is marked by that ally.

Stirring Shout — Bard Attack 1

Your shout of wrath stabs into your foe's mind. Each time your allies hit that foe, they draw strength from its weakness.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Healing, Implement, Psychic
Standard Action — **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Will
Hit: 2d6 + Charisma modifier psychic damage.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, whenever an ally hits the target, that ally regains hit points equal to your Charisma modifier.

Level 2 Utility Spells

Hunter's Tune — Bard Utility 2

You shape the flow of sound, containing it and creating an area of silence.

Daily ✦ Arcane
Minor Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One ally
Effect: Until the end of your next turn, the target gains a +5 power bonus to Stealth checks and doesn't take a penalty to Stealth checks for moving more than 2 squares or running.

Sustain Minor: The effect persists if the target is within range.

Inspire Competence — Bard Utility 2

Your magic channels the skill of ancient experts to help with the task at hand.

Encounter ✦ Arcane
Minor Action **Close burst** 5
Target: You and each ally in burst
Effect: Choose a skill. Until the end of the encounter, each target gains a +2 power bonus to his or her next check using that skill.

Level 3 Encounter Spells

Dissonant Strain — Bard Attack 3

You sing in two pitches at once, creating a song that harms your foe while helping your ally.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Implement, Psychic
Standard Action **Ranged** 5
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Will
Hit: 2d6 + Charisma modifier psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn. In addition, an ally within 5 squares of you can make a saving throw.

Impelling Force — Bard Attack 3

A bolt of force shoves your foe next to one of your allies.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Force, Implement
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d10 + Charisma modifier force damage, and you slide the target 5 squares to a space adjacent to one of your allies.

Level 5 Daily Spells

Song of Discord — Bard Attack 5

You foster distrust in one of your foes, causing it to strike out at its allies.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Charm, Implement
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Will
Hit: The target is dominated until the end of your next turn.
Effect: The target makes a basic attack against an enemy of your choice as a free action.

Tune of Ice and Wind — Bard Attack 5

You hum a discordant tune, slowing your enemies with ice and moving your allies with wind.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Cold, Implement
Standard Action **Area** burst 1 within 10 squares
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Charisma vs. Will
Hit: 2d6 + Charisma modifier cold damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the target is slowed until the end of your next turn.
Effect: You slide each ally in the burst 3 squares.

Level 6 Utility Spells

Allegro — Bard Utility 6

You drum out a hasty rhythm that infuses you and your comrades with magical speed.

Daily ✦ Arcane
Minor Action **Close** burst 10
Target: You and each ally in burst
Effect: You slide each target 2 squares.

Trickster's Healing — Bard Utility 6

Your magic turns an enemy's blunder into an opportunity for your allies to overcome their wounds.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Healing
Immediate Reaction **Close** burst 10
Trigger: An attack misses an ally within 10 squares of you
Target: Each ally in burst missed by the triggering attack
Effect: Each target regains hit points equal to one-half your level + your Intelligence modifier.

Level 7 Encounter Spells

Deflect Attention — Bard Attack 7

You focus a foe's violent determination elsewhere, making you or an ally invisible to it for a moment.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Implement, Psychic
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Will
Hit: 2d6 + Charisma modifier psychic damage, and you or an ally within 10 squares of you becomes invisible to the target until the end of your next turn.

Unluck — Bard Attack 7

You manipulate what was once an ode to fate, speaking it in reverse and warping the weave of fortune.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Implement, Necrotic
Standard Action **Ranged** 5
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8 + Charisma modifier necrotic damage. The next time the target makes an attack roll before the end of your next turn, you roll 1d20 and can replace the target's roll with yours. In addition, choose an ally within 5 squares of you. The next time that ally attacks the target before the end of your next turn, you roll 1d20 and can replace the ally's roll with yours.

Level 9 Daily Spells

Forceful Conduit — Bard Attack 9

A jolt of pain establishes an arcane link between your foe and one of your allies. Your ally can see through the foe's eyes and channel his or her own powers through its body.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement, Psychic
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Will
Hit: 2d8 + Charisma modifier psychic damage, and the target is affected by a forceful conduit (save ends). Choose an ally within 10 squares of you. While the target is affected by this forceful conduit, that ally can make implement attacks during his or her turn as if occupying the target's space.
Miss: Half damage. Until the end of your next turn, an ally within 10 squares of you can make implement attacks during his or her turn as if occupying the target's space.

Hideous Laughter — Bard Attack 9

Horrible convulsions seize your foe in a terrible mockery of laughter.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Charm, Implement, Psychic
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Will
Hit: 3d8 + Charisma modifier psychic damage, and the target can't take opportunity actions and takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends both).
Aftereffect: The target can't take opportunity actions (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the target can't take opportunity actions until the end of your next turn.

Level 10 Utility Spells

Illusory Erasure — Bard Utility 10

Your magic song makes an ally abruptly disappear, giving him or her a chance to sneak up on foes.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Illusion
Minor Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One ally
Effect: The target becomes invisible until the end of your next turn, and you slide the target 2 squares.

Veil — Bard Utility 10

You mask the appearance of your party, sculpting an illusory disguise.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Illusion
Minor Action **Close burst** 10
Target: You and each ally in burst
Effect: You transform the auditory, tactile, and visual qualities of the targets' bodies and equipment. Each target assumes the appearance of a humanoid of the same size, even the appearance of a specific individual you have seen. The illusion lasts for 1 hour, or you can end it as a minor action. A creature can recognize a target's form as illusory with an Insight check opposed by that target's Bluff check with a +5 power bonus.

Word of Life — Bard Utility 10

A single word is sufficient to save an ally from death's grasp while punishing the foe who dealt the deadly blow.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Healing
Immediate Reaction **Close** burst 20
Trigger: An enemy attack reduces an ally within 20 squares of you to 0 hit points or fewer
Target: The triggering ally in burst
Effect: The target can spend a healing surge. In addition, the attacking enemy takes a –5 penalty to all defenses until the end of your next turn.